# COMPETING NETWORKS, HYBRID IDENTITIES:

# TELEVISION AND AUDIENCES IN INDIA

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Journalism,
Indiana University

September 1998

UMI Number: 9907281



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Acknowledgments

To me, this dissertation represents far more than the completion of an academic project. It represents the friendship, generosity, and support of various people in India and the United States who contributed to making this an enriching experience.

My research in India for this project was possible through the CIBER Dissertation Award for Non-Business Students from the School of Business, Indiana University. I am grateful to my committee members who guided the project to completion: Christine Ogan, the chairperson, who provided prompt and valuable feedback on each draft; Michael Curtin who shared his critical perspective on media flows and guided me on chapter content; Chris Anderson who helped me understand the complex relationship between media, culture, and power; and Radhika Parameswaran, who supplied me with literature on postcolonial theory. I would like to thank specially, Beverly J. Stoeltje, for helping me refine my understanding of national identity and globalization, develop the research design, conduct fieldwork, and discuss the competing and shifting identities of television networks and audiences.

Ultimately, this dissertation could not have been written without my respondents. I am grateful to the director, executive producer, program and news executives, and audience research officers at Bangalore Doordarshan; the vice president and general manager at Udaya TV; the vice president of sales and the senior sales executive at Star TV; the regional sales manager and office executive at Zee TV; the head end cable operators at SitiCable, UBN, and InCable; and the various cable franchisees in Bangalore

city. The patience and courtesy they awarded me during interviews made the critical discussion of the television environment in India possible. I am also thankful to Shyamala Nigam, A.S. Chandramouli, and Harish Bijoor for their perspectives on Indian television and Bangalore consumers; and to the librarians at The Deccan Herald, Bangalore, who permitted me to spend hours researching documents in the library.

I would like to thank very specially, the nine audience-families in this study. Because of their generosity, I was able to enter their world of viewing, and comment on audience reception at this crucial juncture in Indian television history. I appreciate their candidness and permission for me to tell their story.

I am particularly grateful to my sister Arathi who introduced me to most of the families, helped me with photocopying, and kept me well-fed during my summer stay in her house. I am also thankful to my great-aunt, Prathap Punita, who introduced me to a few families; my father, David, who provided me with maps and statistics on Karnataka and Bangalore city; my mother, Susheela, who was my critic and guide on the commonwealth perspective; my brother-in-law, Vikram, who supplied me with back-issues of Indian magazines and newspapers for research; and my sisters Pavithra and Harsha who provided moral support through email. Above all, I thank my husband Andy who stood by me through all my joys and frustrations with this project. His immense support sustained my enthusiasm throughout the research and writing process.

Abstract

Divya C. McMillin

Competing Networks, Hybrid Identities:

Television and Audiences in India

This dissertation uses an ethnographic approach to study the impact of private television networks on national identity in India. It seeks to understand the urban viewers' perception of their global, national, and local identities. Participant observation and interviews at television networks and audience homes revealed a similarity in definitions of network and audience identity between respondents at television stations, and audiences themselves. The analysis showed that audiences, empowered by the multiplicity of viewing choices, overwhelmingly chose cable channels and their narratives of progress over Doordarshan and its narratives of underdevelopment. Viewing preferences were influenced by the viewers' language, class, and religion. The preference for private channels over Doordarshan is interpreted as resistance to the construction of Hindu-nation as propagated by Doordarshan. It indicates that in the long term, the availability of region and language-specific programming could contribute to the construction of decentralized, sub-national communities based on differences in class, religion, and language.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

On August 15, 1997, India celebrated 50 years of Independence from British rule. To mark the historic moment at the symbolic August 14 midnight parliamentary session,[1] film playback singer Lata Mangeshkar was scheduled to uncork a bottle of Cadbury Schweppes' Freedom Salvo, a special limited version of Canada Dry, after singing the nationalistic song, "Saare Jahan Se Achcha" (India You Are Most Beautiful). The Salvo symbolized the freedom to choose the champagne of soft drinks, Cadbury Schweppes managers said. However, parliamentarians said the Salvo symbolized crass consumerism, and desecrated the freedom moment. In the end, the parliamentarians won, and Mangeshkar sang minus the Freedom Salvo. The sanctity of the freedom struggle was restored, and the parliamentarians felt they had protected the nation's inner, spiritual sphere from the crude materialism of the western Other ("Midnight session not for MNC ads," 1997).

The struggle over boundaries is an ancient task of nation building. After economic liberalization in 1991 in India, the task has assumed prime importance with multinationals reconfiguring the boundaries of national taste and character. Cadbury

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[1] Independence for both Pakistan and India was declared at midnight, August 15, 1947. Pakistan celebrates independence day on August 14, and India does on August 15.

Schweppes' Freedom Salvo is symbolic of the new spaces of identity provided by the multinationals where Indian consumers, empowered by the availability of choice in the liberalized market, can articulate their preferences and identities. This reordering of national space and popular imagination is met with resistance by government officials and national elites who find their task of boundary maintenance complicated by the influx of competing definitions of state, citizen, and national identity.

I enter the discussion on television and national identity in India at the historical moment of the nation's 50th year of independence. Using an ethnographic approach, I study the impact of liberalized[2] television in India on the urban television viewer's perception of his or her global, national, and local identities. Scholarship on national identity focuses on national boundaries and on the reconfigurations of national and supranational spaces by transnational media (Morley and Robins 1995; Mattelart 1994; Featherstone 1995). I shift the argument about nationalism and national identity from the global arena to the very local, where transnational, national, and regional cable and satellite networks in the country compete through localized and region-specific images, for the local consumer.

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Liberalization, privatization and deregulation are terms that have been used to describe the Indian market. Privatization occurs when ownership of a government-owned industry, as for example, the Indian telecommunication industry, is transferred to the private sector. Deregulation applies only to industries that are already private, but that are regulated to a certain extent by the government in the public interest. Finally, liberalization may be used in the context of both private and government-owned industries. Liberalization means that the government regulations concerning such industries are relaxed. The television industry in India may be considered to be liberalized because the government allows private ownership of television stations, but has not relinquished control over Doordarshan, the state-owned national network.

The Indian government's 1991 policy of economic liberalization allowed the entry of global programming through private transnational networks such as the Hong Kong-based STAR TV network. Private entrepreneurs in various states of the nation, recognizing the potential for profit under the liberalized economy, established regional production centers in various state capitals in 1993 (Shields and Muppidi, 1996). The cable television viewer now has a selection of more than 40 channels from a combination of transnational, national, and regional networks. These private cable and satellite television networks are regarded by national elites as threatening to the state-owned national television network's efforts at national integration and communal harmony (Pathania, 1994).

Several scholars have noted that television is used as an ideological tool by national elites to propagate a sense of national and regional identity (Schlesinger, 1987; Featherstone, 1995; Morley and Robins, 1995). Television has also been studied for the space it provides audience members for the construction or rearticulation of their identities, be they diasporic communities (Gillespie, 1995), or native audiences (Morley, 1992).

Although historically the broadcast media in India served as a site for the representation of national identity, in the context of economic liberalization in the country and globalization of media networks, television is now seen as a link between corporations and consumers. As Morley and Robins (1995) write, "The political and social concerns of the public service era -- with democracy and public life, with national culture and identity -- have come to be regarded as factors inhibiting the development of

new media markets. In the new media order, the overriding objective is to dismantle such 'barriers to trade.' No longer constrained by, or responsible to, a public philosophy, media corporations and businesses are now simply required to respond to consumer demand and maximize consumer choice" (p. 11). Morley and Robins note that the objective of such transnational corporations as Time Warner, Sony, Matsushita, and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, is to break down national boundaries in favor of global markets, and thus is antithetical to the objective of national governments which seek to contain the nation through centralized broadcasting services.

This analysis of the tension between transnational corporations and national governments is simplistic and inaccurate as we shall see in the case of India where the entry of foreign programming and products in the Indian market are profitable for the Indian economy. Despite their accusations of cultural imperialism directed at the global networks, the Indian government, in the 1970s and 1980s, sanctioned the reception of inexpensive sitcoms like "I Love Lucy" and "Different Strokes" from the United States (Pathania, 1995).

Although these accusations continued into the 1990s, programming from STAR TV which included such shows as "Baywatch" and "Santa Barbara" -- shows criticized for not having anything to do with Indian culture (Tusa, 1995) -- was not curbed because the government wanted to keep to its policy of liberalization (Shields and Muppidi, 1996). Despite the lament that foreign programming leads to the "vulgarization of (Indian) culture and the commercialization of every aspect of human life," (Tusa 1995, p. 47), Doordarshan, the national network, has included such shows as "Dallas" and

"Dynasty" within its own programming to keep up with the entertainment-oriented programming of the private global and local channels (Crabtree and Malhotra, 1996).

To cater to the diversity in language and culture in Asia, STAR TV relies on local management, local creative and performing talent, and local technical and sales personnel. Thus in India, STAR TV's Indianized version of MTV, Channel [V], taps Indian humor and colors it with hints of the vernacular to give the channel an irreverent blend of an international and Indian urban character (Ghosh, 1996). STAR TV's move to localization of programming coincided with the emergence of private regional networks such as Sun TV (Madras), Asianet (Trivandrum), and Udaya TV (Bangalore) in 1993 with region-specific programming (Doordarshan, 1995). Not to be outdone, Doordarshan launched metro channels to supplement its regional channels in every major city in the country (Banerjee, 1997). The battle for the consumer therefore, occurs at the level of the local and it is at this level, specifically, in Bangalore city, that I situate this study.

Analyses of television programs to detect ideologies of class and gender (Krishnan and Dighe, 1990) and religion (Rajagopal, 1996; Mitra, 1993), and of audience reception (Mankekar, 1993) in India are situated in a context of pre-liberalized television. Although a few political economy analyses have been conducted on Indian television after economic liberalization in 1991 (Shields and Muppidi, 1996), audience reception of a variety of global, national, and local programming is yet to be researched. It is this void that I hope to fill in this study.

British cultural studies scholars have made important contributions to our understanding of audiences. Contrary to the beliefs of mainstream American behavioral

science in the 1940s, which, as did the Frankfurt School from which it originated, assumed that modern societies had become mass societies as a result of industrial capital development (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1948), the cultural studies theorists provided renewed focus on the varied and complex experiences of media audiences. These theorists went beyond the uses and gratifications approach of mass communication to focus on the cultural politics that defined individuals' media experiences as different from each other. They showed that audiences are influenced by the social contexts surrounding their viewing experience (Bennett, Mercer, and Woollacott, 1986), and by their race, gender, and class (A. Mattelart 1983; Radway 1984; Press 1991).

Critical postcolonial scholars and subaltern[3] theorists protested against western paradigms of media effects through which Third World societies were studied. They emphasized that textual and audience analyses have to be conducted with a keen awareness of the multiplicity of actor and audience identities; experiences; and social, cultural, and political realities (Guha 1994; Spivak 1994; Mankekar 1993).

## Research Questions and Methodology

Drawing from cultural studies and critical postcolonial theory, I pose the following questions in my dissertation: In the context of private television in India, how do audience members perceive themselves -- as residents of Bangalore, as citizens of India, as members of a global community, or as individuals with multi-layered identities?

[3] The subaltern theorists are so called because of their focus on subaltern groups such as women (Spivak, 1994), peasants (Guha, 1994), and lower-castes. The research of subaltern scholars intersects with that of critical and socialist feminists who are concerned with critical differences in society and focus on the experiences of the disenfranchised.

What role does television play in this perception? What programs do they enjoy the most and why? Based on responses to these questions, I explore such broader questions as: in the present context of political unrest,[4] can the intensification of localized regional programming lead to the fragmentation of the nation state? What role do religion, class, and gender play in the sustenance of audience's national identity?

Because media institutions and audiences are located within a culture, there is a necessary correspondence of cultural symbols between the two. I interrogate this correspondence and, in addition to reception analysis, examine the political economy of global and local television in India as well. Thus, I pose further questions: what strategies do state-owned national and private transnational and regional television networks in India use to compete with one another? What identity do these networks seek for themselves (as evident in the goals and objectives they aspire to)? How do they define their audience community (in terms of their general perceptions and of the information obtained through audience research)?

For audience research, I interviewed nine families. Three each were from upper, middle, and lower socioeconomic classes respectively, and three each were from Hindu, Christian, and Muslim religions respectively. Through repeated visits to each home and

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[4] In December 1997, the United Front government was the fourth to collapse in a period of just 18 months. Despite the increasing subaltern power in various states such as the Dravida Munetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu, the Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, and the Dalit Sangha in Karnataka (Nalapat, 1997), the National Congress Party guided by the Hindu Manu law, remains the most powerful because of its national view and nationwide political efforts (led most prominently by the Nehru family). This is in sharp contrast to the intensely regional politics of the subaltern groups (Datta-Ray, 1997). The current political environment in the country is dealt with in greater depth in Chapter 3.

participation in television-watching with family members, I was able to gain insight into the daily behaviors and routines of the families, the role and place of television in their homes, and the dynamics of the interplay of class, religion, and gender in the articulation of their global, national, and local identities. The influence of television in the formation of these identities was evident in their TV-talk, or discussions with one another while watching television, and in their conversations with me during the interviews.

For political economy analysis, I conducted archival research, participant observation, and in-depth interviews at the regional stations of the state-owned national network Doordarshan, the private regional network Udaya TV, and the local marketing and sales offices of the transnational networks, STAR TV and ZEE TV. The purpose was to understand the nature of production and distribution of programs from these networks, and the strategies employed by each to propagate a certain identity and to compete with each other for the largest share of audience-consumers.

Location of the Study

The study is situated in the cosmopolitan, technology capital of India, Bangalore city. Bangalore is poised to become a "global city," not just because of its cosmopolitan population of 5 million, but for its technologically advanced, fast-paced society as well. The city is also called the "Silicon Valley of India," due to the location of such multinational corporations as Motorola, Texas Instruments, Hewlett Packard, and IBM (Aikat & Singhal, 1993).

Sassen (1996) identifies the city as a crucial space for the analysis of "concrete, localized processes through which globalization exists," and says that "the

denationalizing of urban space and the formation of new claims centered in transnational actors and involving contestation, raise the question - whose city is it?" (p. 206). This is indeed an important question for Bangalore, which is witnessing not only the rise of multinational corporations because of the inexpensive and skilled labor available, but also the cris-crossing of global, national, and regional television programming reaching most of its residents.

The city therefore provides a site for the examination of public culture, of the intersection between the local cultural idiom and transnational cultural processes. I position Bangalore as "a zone of contestation and mutual cannibalization -- in which national, mass, and folk culture provide both mill and grist for one another" (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995, p. 5).

This study legitimizes the experiences of urban audiences who, as critical actors, actively make meanings of popular television messages and form a crucial component in the construction of program content and consumer narratives on television. By focusing on the production and consumption of television texts in India, this dissertation advances scholarship on reception studies, globalization, and national identity, theoretically and methodologically.

## Organization of the Dissertation

In this introduction, I have introduced my research questions and methodology. I have hinted at the complexity of national identity in India and the importance of power issues in the analysis of audience responses to television. I will discuss each of these issues in greater depth as they surface in further chapters.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the relationship between culture, power, and national identity in India. The work of postcolonial critics and the subaltern scholars constitutes a break in the Euro-centric scholarship on national identity. The subaltern scholars in particular, offer a critical approach to the study of media audiences because they urge the analysis of the media experiences of subaltern, disenfranchised groups such as women. In this chapter, I discuss how the work of these scholars informs my approach to the study of television and audiences in Bangalore.

Chapter 3 contains a history of the relationship between politics and television in India. National television has been used primarily as the voice of the government. In this chapter, I describe the role of national television since its arrival in the country in 1959, and then discuss the strategies used predominantly by the Congress Party to maintain television as a state apparatus. I draw out the apparent conflict in ideologies with the arrival of private cable and satellite television after economic liberalization in 1991.

In Chapter 4, I describe Bangalore as a global city and explain the methods used in my analysis of audience reception and political economy of television networks. I discuss the imbalances in power between me, a returning native, and my respondents in Bangalore, and describe the various strategies and negotiations I used to diminish this imbalance and allow for polyvocality among the respondents.

In Chapter 5, I critically examine the spaces of identity provided by the national and private cable and satellite television in Bangalore city. I have placed this chapter before a discussion of audience reception to draw out the macro structures of meaning which find resonance in the micro structures of the daily lives of audience members. I

address the ability of television to cross boundaries of private and public, global and local, and material and spiritual.

Chapter 6 introduces the audience-families in this study. I describe the viewing contexts of each family to set up a critical discussion of their perspectives on their national, religious, class and gender identities in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7 offers a description of audiences' television preferences, and analyzes patterns of gender and class that emerged in the viewing contexts of these families. This discussion is developed in greater depth in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8, therefore, is a critical study of the dynamic interplay of class, gender, and religion on audience's perceptions of their global, national, and local identities. The interplay is examined through audiences' perceptions of their inclusion and/or exclusion in television's global and local narratives.

Finally, Chapter 9 offers a summary and conclusion where I discuss the correspondence between production and consumption of television in Bangalore, and expand on the controversial role of television as a site for global and local imaginings in an age of national instability in the country.

# CHAPTER II

## CULTURE, POWER, NATIONAL IDENTITY

In this chapter, I discuss the dynamic relationship between culture and power, and the role television plays in the dissemination of national culture by those in power in India. Theory on national identity, as studied within the European context where the emergence of national consciousness is associated with modernization and the rise of mass media networks, is limiting to the Indian environment. I will provide a critique of this theory before discussing the contribution of postcolonial scholars to our understanding of national identity in India.

I question the construction of national identity drawing from both culturalist and structuralist paradigms of cultural studies. However, as Ang and Morley (1989) caution, "The place and relevance of cultural studies varies from context to context, and has to be related to the specific character of local forms of political and intellectual discourse as culture" (p. 135). Therefore, I discuss the culturalist and structuralist notions of culture and power to initiate my discussion of culture and signification in India.

I see national identity as Geertz (1973) puts it, as an ensemble of texts. National identity is polysemic and can have different meanings for different people. However, a coherent notion of national identity is circulated by national elites for hegemonic purposes to minimize resistance within the nation to rally forces against an external

Other. The culturalist and structuralist approaches in cultural studies differ in their approaches to culture, but together advance our understanding of the relationship between culture and power.

## Culturalist Notions of Culture

In the culturalist paradigm, culture is regarded as *ideas*, that is, conventions and institutions through which valued meanings are shared and made active by a community; and as *practices*, that is, culture is that which weaves itself though all social practices and is the sum of their interrelationship. This notion of culture resists the Marxist base-superstructure formulation of the relationship between ideas and material forces where the "economic" structure defines the "base" (Hall, 1994).

Williams (1958) regarded culture as a dialectic between social being and social consciousness, between culture and non-culture, neither isolatable into separate entities. Culture therefore is both meanings and values of various social groups and classes as defined by their historical conditions which they employ to negotiate with their environment. It is also the lived experiences, traditions and practices of these groups and classes of people. Williams also exposed the political function of culture and analyzed culture and power through the concept of hegemony as introduced by Gramsci in the 1920s and 1930s. Williams' most useful contribution to the conceptualization of culture is his view that the underlying patterns which characterize the practices of any given organization at any given time is a manifestation of its culture -- therefore, culture may be examined through an analysis of the interrelation of social life rather than through a reductionist framework that regards culture as the superstructure defined by the economic

base.

This view is important to this study because I examine articulation of audiences' identities through their lived experiences, familial relationships, and daily activities. The family viewing environment provides a site for the study of hegemonic discourses reproduced in microlevel activities.

The cultural and symbolic anthropologists were concerned with culture as a matrix of texts and symbols and were not concerned with the issue of power and how it influenced the nature of the texts and symbols. Culture is considered a ritual to be shared among a community (Carey, 1989), as the circulation of symbols, values, beliefs, customs, conventions, habits and practices characteristic of a particular society or historical period (Thompson, 1990), and as an ensemble of texts, which in themselves are ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom the texts belong (Geertz, 1973).

The structuralist notion of culture also did not focus on power and was criticized for its abstract theorization rather than concrete explication of people, institutions, or processes. However, a brief description of this approach is important to discuss the contribution of the poststructuralists to our understanding of the relationship between the media, culture and power.

## Structuralist Notions of Culture

Dirks, Eley and Ortner (1994) write that culture is that which is shared by all members of a society, remains relatively stable over time, is composed of a more or less coherent matrix of symbols and relations and is a dynamic configuration of multiple

competing and coexisting discourses. The *configuration* of multiple discourses is what structuralists are interested in.

Levi Strauss(1963) and Sassure (1966) provided the bases for semiotic and structural analyses. Although Althusser receives recognition for his Marxist structuralism, his "reading" of Marx in *Reading Capital* is provided through a linguistic paradigm. Levi-Strauss and Althusser resisted the reductionist base-superstructure framework and thus were similar in this respect with the culturalists. However, these two theorists differed from each other in their approaches to the study of culture.

Levi-Strauss regarded culture as the categories and frameworks in thought and language that humans organize their experience, and said that these frameworks were produced and transformed in the same way that language itself was produced and transformed. Culture could be studied by examining the internal relations within signifying practices through which categories of meanings were produced. Levi Strauss did not discuss the concept of power and his framework is used extensively by cultural anthropologists. On the other hand, Althusser, a Marxist structuralist, examined ideology through a linguistic paradigm to postulate that ideologies are conceptualized and perpetuated through unconscious lived conditions and experiences, not as surface forms and contents of ideas (Hall 1994).

Hall (1982) says the structural approach views meaning as not a practice, but a social production through language and symbolization. A dominant meaning is produced through the regular marginalizing and de-legitimizing of alternative constructions and the regular legitimizing of dominant meaning.

While the structuralists directed attention to structures in society through the study of structures in language, it was the poststructuralists who focused on power and its presence in micro relationships as well as macro institutions. Foucault (1976) and Bourdieu (1994) in particular, were instrumental in introducing power in British cultural studies. Foucault writes:

> Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulations of the law, in the various social hegemonies....Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere (p. 92).

This notion of power is relevant to this study because it prompts an examination of power relations within each television household and among households and leads to an understanding of the structures of power as symbolic of those in the larger nation state.[5] Bourdieu (1994) writes that because language precedes us, we have no claim of authorship over language and are brought into the structures that it has established for us. He notes, "Because any language that can command attention is an 'authorized language,' invested with the authority of a group, the things it designates are not simply expressed

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For a discussion of the interactions of power with performance of ritual and the contribution of the poststructuralists to the understanding of ritual genres, see Stoeltje, B. J. (1993). Power and the ritual genres: American rodeo. Western Folklore, 52 (April), pp. 135-156.

but also authorized and legitimated" (p. 166). Thus, culture is not equally shared by all members of a society. Access to a repertoire of ideas is based on race, gender, ethnicity and other such distinctions.

Homi Bhabha (1990) writes that the borderlines of the nation-space offer a site for the examination of how the cultural identification of peoples emerges through the contestation of various discourses. He says, "The people are not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body politic. They are also a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference: their claim to be representative provokes a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address" (p. 145). Thus the nation-space becomes a contested territory with different peoples struggling for signification under their own terms. The climate of liberalization allows various groups of people in the nation a space for signification through private networks.

## Power and Identity in India

The privilege of signification in India has historically rested with various predominantly Hindu ruling parties in the country. Chatterjee (1993) traces the origins of nationalism in India to the early 19th century social reformers. These individuals were anticolonial nationalists who divided social institutions and practices into the material and spiritual spheres. The material sphere was the external domain which encompassed the science, technology and economy of the state. It was in this domain that the West established its superiority over the East. On the other hand, the spiritual domain was considered a sovereign territory that sealed itself from the colonial power.

In the social reform movement which extended from the 1820s to 1870s, (well

before the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885), Indian reformers allowed the intervention of the British in the reform of traditional institutions and customs only in the early phase of their struggle. In the latter part of the phase, they clearly resisted colonial interference in matters pertaining to national culture and religion, and it is here that national culture and awareness began. Thus the nationalists, by keeping colonial influence to the material sphere, carved out the spiritual sphere as a space for cultural and religious expression, assumed to be pure and untouched by colonialism. These matters within the spiritual sphere were regulated according to the interpretation of Hindu law.

Although India is a secular state, secularism, writes Chatterjee (1995), has nothing to do with its European meaning that is embedded in the Western discourse of the modern state. In 19th century India, attempts at social reform by Indian elites led to the legal involvement of the colonial state. While the characteristics of a secular state may be liberty, equality and neutrality, Chatterjee says that in India, liberty is problematic with different castes, and often has to be decided by the courts who provide a religious Hindu interpretation of the law. Equality is also subjective and is in the interests of the majority Hindu community.

The coincidence of independence for the Indian subcontinent, and the partition of India and Pakistan during the August 14, 1947, midnight hour, reinforced the identities of the two nations as independent and different from each other. Independence from British rule assured the superiority and viability of the nations themselves, while partition symbolically asserted that India stayed a Hindu nation while Pakistan became the Muslim homeland. Kapferer (1988) and Anderson (1991) write that from death and extinction

arise nationalist history. Conversely, we can say that from death and extinction arise anti-nationalist history as well.

The declaration of India as a secular state was a strategy used by the Congress Party at the time of Independence in 1947, to quell riots by religious minorities in the assertion of a Hindu identity. Emphasis on secularism alleviated riots during the partition of Pakistan from India and in various election campaigns in the nation's history. Caste and religious differences were used to mobilize votes. Empowered through development initiatives in the late 1960s, various social groups sought political representation, thus shaking the structure of the grass roots Congress Party. In an effort to stabilize it, the Congress Party under the leadership of Indira Gandhi implemented top-down, centralized systems of administration, and, eventually used the Hindu religion to restore the Party's declining leadership status. Thus, the Party projected Indira Gandhi as *bharat mata* or Mother India, and drew parallels between her and the Hindu goddess Durga, the creator and life-giver of the earth. At the same time, the Party could not push Hinduism too vehemently for fear of alienating Muslim voters, a majority of whom had voted the Congress Party into power. The consequence was the alienation of a large number of Hindus and Muslims, leading to the assertion of various religious nationalisms through great political unrest (Rajagopal, 1996).

Kapferer (1988) writes that, "Nationalism makes the political religious and places the nation above politics. The nation is created as an object of devotion and the political forces which became focused upon it are intensified in their energy and passion. The religion of nationalism, wherein the political is shrouded in the symbolism of 'higher'

purpose is vital to the momentum of nationalism" (p. 1).

Religion and nationalism in India are often conflated to forge powerful and often devastating politics. The Hindu religious philosophies of 19th century reformers provided the foundations for such powerful organizations as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).[6] The BJP uses Hindu mythological imagery in election campaigns. In the 1991 national elections for example, the BJP leader Lal Kishan Advani applied vermilion on his forehead, and posed with a bow and arrow reminiscent of the god Kodanda Rama. The BJP stresses *hindutva*, or Hindu national and religious identity. Despite the declarations of secularism in the Indian Constitution, the reasoning of the BJP and the VHP is that an Indian is essentially a Hindu, and that because Hindus are a majority in the nation, they should be ruled by Hindus. The political sentiments of the BJP, VHP, and RSS overlap to a large extent (Van der Veer, 1994).

The BJP and VHP, in constructing their discourse of a Hindu nation used the Babri Masjid temple-mosque debate[7] in Ayodhya in the northern state of Maharashtra, to braid religion and politics together such that their efforts in rebuilding a Hindu temple in

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The BJP owes its political success to the support of the VHP and the RSS. The former is an organization of religious leaders while the latter is a militant youth organization.

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The Babri Masjid was built in 1528 by the founder of the Mughal dynasty, Babar. The local belief is that the Masjid was built on a Hindu temple of the god Rama, which itself was built in the 11th century A.D. The temple-mosque is now the object of communal riots as Hindus and Muslims all over the nation make claims on its identity. For a detailed account of the debate and its implications on constructions of nation and nationalism, see Van der Veer, P. (1994). Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ayodhya was a symbolic assertion of their efforts to rebuild a Hindu India and protect the nation from its Muslim conquerors in the past and in the present (Van der Veer, 1994). A series of riots ensued in 1992 and early 1993, and the Hindu nationalist party, the Shiv Sena[8] joined forces with the BJP and the VHP to hunt down and destroy Muslim communities in Maharashtra (Kamdar, 1996). So effective is this symbolism that five years later, on December 6, 1997, nationwide protests and riots between Hindus and Muslims took place to mark the destruction of the Babri Masjid, leaving 2,000 dead ("Destruction of India mosque," 1997).

The death of Hindus and Muslims in Maharasthra is seen as symbolic of the death of Bombay as a cosmopolitan city, the capital of the state (Kamdar, 1996). The Shiv Sena, the ruling party in Bombay at the time of this writing, in an attempt to rewrite the city's identity, changed its name to Mumbai.[9]

This brings us again to the importance of exploring the city itself as a negotiated terrain in the construction of national identity. Describing Bombay, Kamdar (1996)

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8

The Shiv Sena was started in 1966 based on the political philosophies of Shivaji, the Maratha ruler of the 17th century. Shivaji envisioned a Hindu empire in India. Shiv Sena means "Shiva's Army". Shiva is one of the three supreme deities in the Hindu religion, the other two being Brahma and Vishnu.

9

In this dissertation, I shall use Bombay instead of Mumbai to allow myself the position of the researcher-observer, commenting on nationalist activities, but not immersing myself in struggles for signification. The Indian government has stated that while state governments are free to change the names of their cities, the Anglicized names such as Bombay, Madras (changed to Chennai) and Trivandrum (changed to Thiruvananthapuram) will remain to avoid confusion in international relations, particularly trade. (See, "For Center , it is Bombay not Mumbai, Madras not Chennai." (February 17, 1997). The Times of India, p. 1).

writes, "A great national and regional city, Bombay aspires to become a truly global city defined primarily, as such cities are, by its relationship with other global cities. The struggle for Bombay is a struggle between an internationalized, wealthy elite, which is allied with an emerging middle-class that increasingly identifies with and participates in the global consumer culture, at one extreme, and at the other, the vastly more numerous poor who have become more or less irrelevant in the global post industrial world but who nevertheless still need to eat, continue to dream, and keep coming to the city" (p. 77). As we shall see in Chapter 4, the claims over Bombay have implications for the claims made on Bangalore. The history of Bombay has interesting ties to the history of Bangalore and the commentary on nationalist ideologies in Bombay as a global city allows important connections to the commentary on such ideologies in Bangalore.

The struggle for identity in the city assumes renewed intensity in the face of globalization. Various state governments have debated changing the names of streets and public buildings to assert their vision of the state or nation's identity. Several politicians are also divided on whether the nation's name should remain as India, or should be changed to its Hindu version, "Bharat." As Nagarkar (1997) writes, politicians "prefer to believe that they can replace the urgent task of hard-headed and difficult decisions, intelligent long-term policies and governance with changing the names of railway stations, airports and states" (p. 4).

While Kamdar (1996) asks whether Bombay can become a global city or whether it will be constrained as Mumbai belonging to the Maharashtrian Hindus from whom it was, according to (his)story appropriated, I think the question is immaterial. The role of

the state in the mobilization of nationalist ideology is no doubt important, but as Anderson (1991) writes, nation and community are imagined. Anderson's cultural definition of nation negates the role of the state, yet it points to the possibility of imaginations of community that lie outside state control. The task then, is not to speculate on how nation and state are constructed and disseminated by various elites, but to explore these constructions in everyday activities of the people for whom these constructions are made and who themselves, actively make meanings, negotiate, and even subvert these constructions.

Scholars of nationalism vary in their approaches to the role of the state in the construction of national identity. The bulk of theory on national identity comes from European theorists and is critiqued to be "a product of European colonialism, capitalist expansion, the creation of international and local bourgeoisies, an instrument in class domination, and so on" (Kapferer 1988, p. 3). However, the western discourse on nationalism makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of the complexity of Indian nationalism because the latter necessitates an interrogation of the former, an interrogation which itself becomes an exercise in identity construction because we examine how nationalism in India is *different* from that in European nations.

Theorizing National Identity in India

Van der Veer (1994) and Rajagopal (1996) write that nationalism in India exists at multiple and complex levels. It cannot be addressed through the predominantly western discourse on nationalism which is tethered to the discourse on modernity.

To a large extent, scholarship on nationalism in India critiques that of nationalism

in European countries in certain important ways: first, it does not regard the emergence of nationalism as coincidental with modernity as is seen in the work of Anderson (1989), Gellner (1983), and Hobsbawm (1990); second, it questions the character of nationalism itself and posits that nationalism (particularly in India) is not uniform in character (as presumed by Anderson and Gellner), but composed of anti-colonial and religious nationalisms as well; finally, it contests the definitions of state and nation as either denying the role of state (Anderson, 1991), or awarding too much agency to it (Gellner, 1983).

Chatterjee (1993) objects to Anderson's idea that Europe provided "modular" forms for the rest of the world from which the latter imagined their communities. This, the author feels, relegates the rest of the world to the position of mere consumers of modernity and does not account for anticolonial nationalism where identity was based on *difference* from the western modular forms. Thus, he writes, the autobiography of nationalism is inherently flawed.

Rajagopal (1996) writes that Anderson's conflation of national consciousness with modernity is problematic because he applies the term "modern" equally to them and does not account for contradictory and uneven development characteristic of developing countries such as India.

Van der Veer (1994) critiques Gellner's overarching modernization theory and comments that the basic flaw in this theory as well as in those of many Marxist analyses of capitalist expansion, is the assumption that a social system may be integrated only through the sharing of a common culture dependent on a moral consensus. He writes that

nationalism also "creates other nationalisms -- religious, ethnic, linguistic, secular -- but not a common culture. The modernization paradigms makes too much of homogenization, while it overlooks 'antagonization' and 'heterogenization.' The forging of identity always creates diversity" (p. 15).

Anthony Smith (1986) [10] opposes the idea that nationalism is associated with modernity. He considers the nation-as-modern view shallow and advocates the study of pre-modern cultural models such as myth, symbol, and historical memory to understand what constitutes a nation. Smith introduces the concept of the ethnic community or *ethnie*. The *ethnie* is a collective cultural unit. It is a pre-modern group characterised by form, identity, myth, symbol and communication codes. The cultural sentiments and myths shared in the ethnies continued with them through industrialization and capitalism into the modern era, and thus, into the modern nation.

Van der Veer (1994), like Smith (1986), critiques the tendency to view nationalism as opposed to traditionalism and parochialism, and writes that the larger frameworks of nationalism existed before the colonial era and are built upon and modified through religious nationalism. In his examination of religious nationalism in India, Van der Veer writes "we need both an analysis of 'tradition' that is not prejudiced by the discourse of modernity and a theory of the impact of colonialism and orientalism that does not deny agency to colonial subjects" (p. x).

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For a comprehensive account of ethnic communities and how they evolved into nations, see Anthony D. Smith. (1986). The Ethnic Origin of Nations. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell.

Rajagopal (1996) critiques Anderson's cultural definition of national identity and says Anderson underplays the role of the state and "thus idealizes the rhetoric of the liberal democratic state and presents it as a general social condition marking nationhood. ...By defining the nation as cohering essentially in the imagination, Anderson sidesteps the delicate issue of its unravelling in reality, and offers reassurance that the *idea* of the nation is still intact" (pp. 444-445, italics is original). Rajagopal writes that such a definition of national identity is provocative because it is perceived to lie in human imagination, safe from the ravages of state. However, this is misleading because society is held together not just by shared values, but through the "coercive and constraining power of social institutions, and the sedimented practices operating across these institutions" (p. 445). Rajagopal recognizes the importance of governing structures that organize popular imagination of the nation.

While Anderson (1991) provides a cultural definition, Gellner (1983) provides a Marxist one, and places prime importance on the role of a centralized agency, the state, in imparting a uniform high culture or identity to its citizens. Gellner makes a distinction between state and nation. He says "Among the various sanctions of the maintenance of order, the ultimate one -- force -- may be applied only by one special, clearly identified, and well centralized, disciplined agency within society. That agency or group of agencies is the state" (p. 3). The nation, on the other hand, is evident only when two individuals share a culture[11] and if they recognize each other as members of the same nation.

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11

Gellner (1993) defines culture as "a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating." p. 7.

Gellner's (1983) definition of culture is a secular one because a society's transition from agrarianism to industrialism and national consciousness brings with it individualism and secularism.

While Anderson (1991) rejects the state and Gellner (1983) embraces it, Hobsbawm (1990) acknowledges the importance of the state in nationalism and also points to processes among people of a nation that fosters nationalism. He writes that the nation must be analysed in terms of political, technological, administrative, and economic conditions. National consciousness develops unevenly through these processes and not through a shared, uniform national consciousness as postulated by Anderson and Gellner. Hobsbawm stresses the importance of a mass secondary education for the development of nationalism.

Rajagopal (1996) critiques Gellner and Hobsbawm for awarding too much agency to the state. He says Gellner dismisses nationalisms because they are imagined and not real. Thus a modern society is centralized and industrial. Also Rajagopal notes, Hobsbawm stresses too much on the importance of state and mass secondary education for the development of nationalism.

These are valid criticisms of the role of the state in fostering nationalism. However, as we shall see in the discussion of the state-owned and private television in India, the issue is not merely whether the state is irrelevant or all-powerful; the issue is *how* the state negotiates with competing frameworks of meaning to organize the popular imagination into certain modes of consumerist and nationalist behaviour. The task of the state is to mobilize the consumption of products and the consumption of national

ideologies. Conflict obviously arises when the two are not related, as is the case with private cable and satellite television which strive at connecting audiences through a reinforcement of global and regional identities respectively, using the national as a strategic stepping stone to global and local narratives.

To summarize then, nationalism in India is uneven, heterogeneous and complex Van der Veer, 1994). National identity exists and is articulated at multiple levels and is influenced by various religious, cultural, social, and political realities. As critics of the nation-as-modern view show, a framework that upholds rupture and difference as foundations upon which identity is articulated, submerges the importance of cultural continuity across these lines. An understanding of nationalism in India therefore demands an analysis of the cultural continuity of hierarchical structures and of popular consciousness through the arbitrary phases of imperial rule, colonialism, and post-colonialism.

I agree with Pieterse and Parekh (1995) that colonialism and postcolonialism must not be seen as dichotomic phases where postcolonialism marks a rupture from colonialism or marks the point at which national consciousness emerged. Similarly, colonialism does not mark a break from pre-colonial traditions. Colonial rulers were mainly concerned with creating and maintaining the basic conditions of their rule, and this they did by reorganizing existing hierarchical structures. Values and institutions had to be grafted onto existing ‘traditional society’ to be understood. The notion of cultural continuity is valuable to understand the structure of liberalized television networks in India and the similarity in programming across these networks.

The postcolonial critics provide an alternate paradigm for the study of culture and nationalism in India. Feminist postcolonial scholars in particular, stress that postcolonial theory is not merely an interrogation of western models of national identity or development, but a questioning of Indian nationalist ones as well, because the latter imitate the former in constituting the nation as an undivided subject, marginalizing the experiences of the subalterns such as women and lower castes.

## Postcolonial (Re) Constructions of India

Scholars of postcolonialism are divided in their approaches to the study of colonialism and postcolonialism in India. While they all recognize that colonialism, orientalism, and nationalism are all part of the western discourse of enlightenment, much of the scholarship is self-reflective where these scholars muse on colonial tendencies in the work of their colleagues. The work of many Marxist and feminist postcolonial scholars is valuable to this study because it breaks away from imperialistic academic traditions of international theory. I will briefly discuss and critique the main arguments of postcolonial scholarship before describing my own approach to the study of audiences in postcolonial India.

Many Third World countries achieved independence from colonial rule in the 1940s and 1950s. However, the globalizing spread of imperialism is a much discussed phenomenon in the late 20th century (Williams and Chrisman, 1994; Mukherjee, 1996). Postcolonialism, a new name for Commonwealth Literature, marks an awareness in English literature departments in countries of the Commonwealth, of the "autotelic nature of the literary text and the sealed anti-septic notion of 'artistic' value uncontaminated by

the political circumstances of its production and reception -- forcing everyone involved in the discipline to rethink the limitations of the Eurocentric/universalist aesthetic norms" (Mukherjee 1996, p. 4). Thus, postcolonialism is a dismantling of the centralist character, and calls for decentralization from the commonwealth structure.

Mukherjee (1996) says that awareness and desire for decentralized textual interpretation is not always marked with financial support or academic recognition, and the value placed on the teaching of British literature in Commonwealth classrooms without discussion of its ideological imperialist underpinnings limits the space for postcolonial literary criticism.

The postcolonial era in India began in 1947 when the nation gained its independence. Scholars of postcolonialism[12] however, resist defining it as a historically specific stage in Indian history. Rather, they regard it as a dynamic process, and examine its manifestations in classic texts (Chatterjee 1993; Spivak, 1990; Homi Bhabha, 1990), in the writing and remembering of Indian history (Prakash, 1990), in the contributions of subalterns to nationalism (Guha, 1994 and Spivak, 1988), and in the discourse of Third World "othering" (Said 1989; Homi Bhabha 1990; Spivak, 1990).

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12

The term postcolonialism has been used extensively by various scholars as containing a hyphen. While the hyphen has been argued to invoke images of the colonizer by constructing the present condition as opposed to or as antithetical to the colonial context (Jussawala, 1993), and of being symbolic of the distortion and decontextualization of the postcolonial experience (Vijaykumar, 1996), I use the term without the hyphen to address the continuity between structures of power in the colonial and postcolonial eras. Trivedi's (1996) criticism that this continuity implies erasure of the colonial experience is relevant, yet I believe that the continuity in hierarchical structures is an important aspect to consider, and, using a critical perspective, take into account the struggles of the subalterns within and without colonial rule.

In colonial days, Prakash (1990) writes, European scholars noted that the Brahmins in India of Aryan race were of similar stock as the Europeans themselves. The search for European origins in India and the discovery of it through Sanskrit language and texts, essentialized and distanced Indians first because Indian society was seen as the embodiment of European childhood, and as the eternal child, was made incapable of progress. Second, India was perceived to be composed of a variety of languages and texts and appeared unchanging and passive as the object of the Orientalist's gaze (Said 1989; Van der Veer 1994).

The orientalists highlighted the decline of Hindu civilization under Muslim rule and studied Muslims in India as part of the Islam civilization from the Middle East. Muslims were studied as invaders, while Hindus were represented in historical accounts as the true natives of India. With the utilitarian scrutiny of James Mill and other liberal reformers, Sanskrit texts and language were no longer romanticized and became examples of Indian backwardness. As a result, these texts were pushed off-centre and ethnological, archeological and census surveys were used to regularize and formalize Indian society, pushing to the margins, peasants, religious practices, and diversity (Prakash, 1990).

Census procedures began in 1872 and allowed a relatively small group of British officials to organize a teeming Indian society. Categories like caste, religion, community, and race were derived from classical Hindu texts and then systematically used in the organization of the population. In their application of indigenous law, the British clearly differentiated Hindu law from Mohammedan law which, when institutionalized as part of

census operations, established a Hindu majority and a Muslim minority (Van der Veer 1994; Said 1989; Prakash 1990).

Van der Veer (1994) points out that through history, conversions from Hinduism to Islam and Buddhism were done to escape the persecutions of the Hindu caste system. However, although Hindu elites wove a discourse that placed them at the top of the hierarchical Hindu society, both Hindu and Muslim elites emphasized their foreign Aryan descent as evident in their fair skin -- a residue of oriental racism.

Postcolonialism marks the quest by national and western elites to 'uncover the pure,' to examine what India really was like after colonial influence was removed. Although both western and national elites regarded India still as an undivided subject, the western elites sought to discover the India beneath the British influence for the possibility of garnering a consumer marketplace.

National elites on the other hand, attempted a vision of a pure India to reassert the superiority of the nation over western nations. Their strategy in doing so was to devalue western culture. Thus, while colonial discourse regarded India as an undivided entity, Prakash (1990) writes, the nationalist writing of Indian history both before and after independence, did not break free from Orientalist "othering" of India. First, the nationalists regarded India as undivided (although they attributed it to a sovereign unitary will), and second, the nationalists adopted the rationale of Reason and stated that India could modernize itself through the strength of its ancient history and universalist spirit, if only free from colonial slavery. Western-educated Indian nationalist historians in casting India against the modernization paradigm, ironically recast it as underdeveloped

according to these developmental standards.

## The Nation as Female in Postcolonial Discourse

Nationalist writings also described India as a unified (female) body. Chakravarty (1993) writes that the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's construction of India was a strategy of unification. In a time of Muslim-Hindu clashes, Nehru's text, The Discovery of India, she writes, undertakes a "hegemonic project of appeal to all sections of India's population, primarily Hindus and Muslims, to form one nation and not two" (p. 22). This national elitist discourse is particularly dangerous to religious minorities because it upholds the chaste (female) Hindu nation as enduring and eternal despite invasions by first the Muslims and then the British. Muslims and Christians are therefore pushed to the margins of Indian society, and are considered as polluting influences on the pure Hindu centre (Chakravarthy 1993; Prakash 1990). In his construction of the Indian nation as a chaste and quizzical female, Nehru writes:

> Overwhelmed again and again, her spirit was never conquered, and today when she appears to be the play-thing of a proud conqueror, she remains unsubdued and unconquered. About her there is the elusive quality of a legend of long ago; some enchantment seems to have held her mind....Shameful and repellent she is occasionally, perverse and obstinate, sometimes even a little hysteric, this lady with a past....From age to age she has produced great men and women, carrying on the old tradition and yet ever adapting it to changing times (p. 12).

The equation of the woman and her body to mother India legitimized for the nationalist movement, the confinement of the woman to the private sphere and the regulation of her activities, in order to protect her from being corrupted by foreign influences (Derne, 1995).

The subaltern studies grew from the work of Marxist and feminist postcolonial scholars. The contribution of subaltern theorists constitutes a break in the construction of India as an undivided female subject. The subaltern theorists regard the nation as composed of a multiplicity of changing positions treated as the effects of power relations.

Subalterns draw from poststructuralists and deconstructionists (particularly Foucault and Derrida) and claim autonomy for the subaltern consciousness. Feminist studies intersect with subaltern studies because of the recognition that even the subaltern is a divided entity, with power differentials that place women at the bottom of the subaltern ladder. The critical third world postcolonial perspective therefore, regards the Indian nation as constructed from multiplicity and difference and focuses on the subordinated's subject-position. The postcolonial critics scrutinize the constructions of gender in colonial writings and nationalist movements.

Colonial writings constructed Indian men as sexually, politically, and militarily impotent. Van der Veer (1994) discusses that Hindu men felt they had failed in their show of resistance to the early Muslim and later British invaders and that this failure, as depicted in European accounts, spoke of their inadequate manhood. The nationalist objective was directed at the revival of both Hinduism and manhood.

The focus on manhood and Hinduism did not exclude women from the nationalist struggle, however. As a reaction to colonialist condemnation of Indian society as oppressive to women because of the custom of sati (bride burning), child marriage, dowry and purdah (seclusion for Muslim women), the nationalist struggle sought to uplift women. Mahatma Gandhi rejected those parts of the Hindu scriptures that denigrated

women, and instead, urged them to participate in the swadeshi (self-reliance) movement where they would spin and wear *khadi* (home-spun) clothes (Derne, 1995).

Women, framed as victims of social backwardness, became symbols of modernity as well, because efforts to educate women and make them self-reliant were synonymous with efforts at modernity. Early reformers in the Middle East and South Asia also directed nationalist efforts toward achieving modernity. In doing so, women were privileged because their progress was seen as a key to modernity. Yet this privilege was regulated by the patriarchal society so that they were modern in the public sphere in terms of work and education, yet conservative in the private sphere, at home (Kandiyoti, 1994).

Despite his projects for the self-reliance of women, Gandhi embraced the Hindu restriction of women to the private sphere of the home. He upheld the notion that celibacy and militant non-violence were crucial to freedom from colonial oppression, and in openly admiring the celibacy of Hindu widows, reinvented the patriarchal structure of Indian society instead of reforming it (Derne, 1995) . Derne writes that "While Gandhi and others saw celibacy and sexual self-control as an important part of Indian nationalism, the emphasis on controlling women's sexuality by limiting their contact with outsiders has been just as important a part of nationalist discourse about sexuality" (p. 11).

Chhachhi (1988) writes that Hindu fundamentalists today urge women to give up their jobs and stay in their homes taking care of husband and children -- a fall back to Gandhi's recommendation that women contribute to the swadeshi movement by staying home and spinning cloth and not going out and subjecting themselves to moral corruption

in the workplace.

In her essay, Can the Subaltern Speak, Spivak (1988) writes that Indian nationalism has been dominated by colonial and bourgeois elitism. The achievements of the Indian nation and of a national consciousness is attributed to Indian elite personalities, institutions, activities, and ideas. By focusing on the woman as the subaltern, the researcher stands in danger of further muting the subject through the imperialist research framework. The task of the post-colonial intellectual (who sometimes necessarily has to leave her context and unlearn her muted position from a distance), is to measure the silences of those women in Indian colonial history. For example, Spivak writes that the abolishment of sati or widow burning is seen as an example of "White men are saving brown women from brown men" (p. 612) and does not acknowledge the testimony of women at all. The protection of the "third world woman" becomes a signifier for the establishment of a good society and this was accomplished by transferring what was a private ritual into the public legal domain. Spivak (1988) and Guha (1994) point to the importance of allowing the subalterns to speak, to record their voices and experiences and include them in the public sphere as well, rather than speak for them through impressionistic observations.

While the postcolonial critics agree that their work constitutes a departure from the imperialistic trend of orientalist literature, they differ in their views on the course postcolonial scholarship should take. Arun Mukherjee (1996) critiques the lumping together of postcolonial scholarship under illusory commonality in themes of resistance, claim to authenticity, and subversion of colonial power. She says this lumping together

assumes that writers who write back to the centre are authentic voices of their society, that the experiences of all colonized are similar, and that blanket terms such as 'suppression' and 'marginalization' dismiss the reality of internal divisions and hierarchies in the colonized society itself. She points out the fallacy in generalizing the colonized's experience whether in the colonial or postcolonial environment. What is required, she notes, is a questioning of experiences based on gender, religion, class, and so on. Griffith (1996) agrees with Mukherjee on the dangers of essentializing the colonizer and the colonized, and comments that rather than dismissing either, we need to explore the relations and continuities between the two.

Rather than adopt a Marxist view which shows India's development as necessarily incomplete due to domination and struggle, and rather than rely solely on a historical view which examines the development of structures and not so much the maintenance of power differentials, Prakash (1990) states that we need to draw from both and acknowledge not just the existence, but the historicity of class, gender, regional, and linguistic hierarchies.

Awareness of the multiplicity of experiences and identities of the colonized is not quite enough, however. A strong criticism of critical postcolonial scholarship is that it prompts western academics to rethink international theory, but does not speak or advance theory in Third World nations that are the homelands of postcolonial scholars. Paranjape (1996) calls for an awareness and departure from western structures of academic thought that further subordinate the Indian subject.

## The Intersection Between Postcolonial and Feminist Theory

The inclusion of subaltern voices in the public sphere in postcolonial scholarship finds resonance in various feminist writings. Fraser (1989) writes that the task of critical theory is to expose the ways in which so-called public spheres exclude minorities. We need to develop a critical theory that identifies the mechanisms by which some groups are made subordinate to others. As a scholar from the socialist feminist perspective, I am particularly interested in the television viewing experiences of those groups which have been historically excluded from master narratives of national identity and development, specifically, women. Fraser's deconstruction of the public sphere influences me in my research approach where I agree with Lisbeth van Zoonen (1994) that power is not a monolithic entity that some groups possess while others do not. To translate feminist theory into practice, van Zoonen writes that a radical politicization characterizes the feminist research process, both internally by questioning power relations inherent in doing research, and externally by striving to produce results that are relevant to the feminist endeavor. Van Zoonen notes that some feminist scholars do not take audience pleasures seriously, but conclude that female enjoyment of patriarchal and hegemonic narratives in the text are a product of false consciousness.

I believe that some people can be dominated in one relation and subordinated in another and hence regard audience ethnography as crucial in detecting how lived experience of individuals, especially of women within a household (who are defined by relations of domination and subordination), influence how they negotiate their global, national, and regional identities.

Van Zoonen (1994) offers a critique of conventional audience analyses that focus on the male/female distinction without taking into account such intersecting variables as race, ethnicity, and sexuality, to name a few. She writes that gender should be regarded as an "ongoing process by which subjects are constituted often in paradoxical ways. The identity that emerges is therefore fragmented and dynamic; gender does not determine or exhaust identity" (p. 33).

I draw from the intersection between the work of postcolonial subaltern and socialist feminist scholars to assert that gender and nation are contested categories. I agree with the criticisms levelled on the orientalist and nationalist constructions of India. However, I assert that while the imposition of the Hindu construction of the Indian nation-state and its ideologies of male leadership and female submission onto the analysis of popular consciousness and interpretation of television reception makes for an elegant framework, it denies the dynamic nature of women's roles and their resistance and reconfiguration of the patriarchal structures within their homes and work today.

In this dissertation, I address the intersection of religion and class as well as gender in audiences' interpretations of television programs and in their perceptions of their global, national and local identities. I acknowledge the predominantly Hindu construction of nation, but particularly evaluate the contestations to this construction made by the audience members and the role of class, gender, and religion in influencing the nature of this contestation. The availability of multiple levels and varieties of programming on television in India today provides a site for the interrogation of these alternate structures and interpretations. These perspectives guide my approach to

audience analysis where I take into account the daily activities within the households of audience members, situate their viewing behaviors within those activities, and following Radway's (1989) ethnography of women reading romance, ask audience members to describe the pleasures, escape, and knowledge they derive from this leisurely activity.

Audience ethnography is based on the premise that a reader's encounter with a text is structured by his or her socio-historical context. Thompson (1990), in his discussion of the "mediazation" of modern culture, writes that a different set of social relations are organized around each medium. Morley's (1992) ethnography of Nationwide audiences provides insight into gender and power relations that emerge in the ritual of watching television in the domestic arena. Such an approach to television viewing is useful in that it acknowledges the importance of the domestic environment and situates television watching among other familial activities.

This method has certain disadvantages, however. First, it cannot account for values, ideas and beliefs that lie in the unconscious of the viewer and that cannot be articulated adequately. Also, even the most discreet of participant observations create a certain 'contamination' of the natural environment. Ethnography is time consuming and expensive not just for the observation sessions, but for the hours and labor it takes to transcribe tapes. Finally, the investigator herself may occupy a certain subjective position. Thus as an observer of Indian audiences and as an Indian myself, I may not be aware of certain ideological manifestations that an outsider may pick up on. On the other hand to my advantage, I may be more sensitive to cultural nuances that an outsider may be oblivious to.

Thus, despite a few disadvantages, audience ethnography provides a method by which we may investigate how particular cultural competencies are organized, distributed and shared. It enables the researcher to understand whether the audience has been able to make a critical reading of the text, or if the rules of such reading have been supplied by the deep structures within society.

# CHAPTER III

## POLITICAL HISTORY OF TELEVISION IN INDIA

Price (1995) writes that government control over broadcast media diminishes in the age of globalization. While initially regulated as tools for the propagation of democracy and national identity, media industries are now no longer confined to national or regional boundaries. Direct broadcast satellite allows the flow of messages across national borders, and national governments are fearful of the implications of this flow for national identity and cultural integrity. Loss of control over the definitions and circulation of national culture translates into loss of power and control over national boundaries -- a reason for hegemonic anxiety.

Gramsci proposed a theory of hegemony where the media were regarded as tools of the ruling classes for the organization of consent by the construction and maintenance of a system of alliances through political and ideological discourses. To Althusser, the media formed a part of the ideological state apparatus with such institutions as religion, education, law, family, politics, and culture, and is seen as a vehicle of the ruling class for the promotion of their ideology (Thompson, 1990). Price (1995) writes that central control over the mass media within a nation has been recognized as a crucial strategy to sustain national narratives and suppress oppositional discourses.

These theories of the media receive resonance among Indian media scholars.

Television in India has been criticized for its reinforcement of class and gender hierarchies (Krishnan and Dighe, 1990). Pendakur (1995) writes that Doordarshan's programming is designed to serve the needs of indigenous and foreign capitalists as well as the middle and upper middle classes. Doordarshan is also accused of primarily providing a space for advertisers to reach middle class consumers and for the ruling party to disseminate nationalistic discourse to construct a national culture that supports its position in power (Mankekar, 1993).

As discussed in Chapter 2, culture and power are integrally intertwined. The power to mobilize national cultural symbols through a centralized, state-owned television network in India has predominantly rested with various Hindu ruling parties in the nation. The intention to provide autonomy for radio and television has been on the political agenda ever since India achieved independence in 1947. However, this effort, embodied in the Prasar Bharati Bill and now accompanied by the Broadcast Bill, is yet to become a reality, and itself serves as an example of the resistance by parties in power to relinquish control over this powerful system.

In this chapter, I will describe the history of the relationship between politics and television in India to provide an understanding of the ideological use of the national network and the contestations to this use brought about by private cable and satellite television in the context of economic liberalization. The coincidence of political upheavals, television innovations, and legislation debates, makes it difficult to chart the history of television in a clear chronological manner. Hence, in this chapter, I focus more on major events that influenced the structure and content of television in India than on a

mere time line of these events.

## Television for National Integration and Development

After independence in 1947, the Indian government was faced with several tasks: to foster economic growth by developing the shaky industrial sector, to cut down the country's large population, and to develop such areas as transport, agriculture, health, education, sanitation, water and electric supply, and most importantly, to sustain the national sentiment of the people that they belonged to a single, sovereign, secular nation (Kust, 1964). Thus, the mass media rose in importance as a vehicle for unification, and Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, projected television as a symbol of the nation's modernity, progress, and freedom.[13]

Despite intentions to begin a television network for development and national integration, the birth of television in India in 1959 was more due to chance than planning. After an industrial exhibition in New Delhi that year, Philips India Ltd. which had set up a closed circuit television at the event, gifted it to the government. The Indian government used this television to transmit two one-hour programs on Tuesdays and Fridays to a 25 km radius from an All India Radio studio in New Delhi (Doordarshan, 1996). Donations of studio equipment from the West German government in 1965 and

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13 India comprises 25 states, 7 union territories, 3,696 towns and 580,702 villages, and has a total population of around 930 million. With an official language for each state, each with several dialects, the task of educating the nation about development issues through the mass media is a complex and formidable one. The country has a literacy rate of 44.7 percent in rural areas and 73.1 percent in urban areas (Doordarshan, 1996). While the print media is a private enterprise, Doordarshan and All India Radio are government-owned, and have been politicized as vehicles of social development and national integration.

the impetus given by the Indira Gandhi government at the time[14] fostered the growth of television.

Powerful figures in the independence process, such as the socialist reformers as far back as the late 19th century and the Indian National Congress Party in the 1920s, recognized the importance of linguistic unity in nation-building (Chatterjee, 1995). These leaders were grappling with a teeming population marked by linguistic, religious, and cultural differences. The Congress Party recognized that a common language could assist in the progress of individual states, but could pose an overall threat to the unity of the nation. They declared Hindi as the national language and Doordarshan's use of Hindi in its national programming for serials and news shows during prime time, is a strategy for nation-building.

Ever since the first telecast in 1959, television, under Nehru's socialist government, was promoted as a tool for education and development. Early programming was educational, and was targeted to middle and high school students to supplement formal lessons in Physics, Chemistry, Hindi, Current Affairs, and Geography.[15] Other programs included instructional material on hygiene, family planning, farming methods, and so on (Mitra, 1993).

Development rhetoric was strong in UN and UNESCO conferences and the role of

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Indira Gandhi succeeded her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, as Prime Minister of India and president of the Congress Party after Nehru's death in 1964.

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This programming was part of a collaborative experiment between the All India Radio and the Ford Foundation (USA) to raise the standard of education in the country.

television for rural development was studied in depth in India. The Chanda Committee was set up in 1966 to examine the development potential and profitability of radio and television in the country. In its report, the committee stated that television should be a medium of education and that radio[16] and television should receive commercial sponsorship to some extent so that they could reach their development objectives (Chatterji 1991; Mitra, 1993).

## The SITE Project

With its emphasis on development objectives, Doordarshan began telecast of such instructional programs as Krishi Darshan (on agriculture) and Mahilon Ke Liye (on women's issues) by the mid 1960s. However, these programs were received in only 80 villages -- less than one percent of all villages in India. To expand the reach of these programs, an experiment in satellite technology was launched through the joint efforts of the Indian Space Research Centre (ISRO), NASA (USA), Doordarshan, and various state

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Since its inception under the Indian Broadcasting Company in 1927, radio received 80 percent of its revenue from radio licences. It received the rest of its revenue through a 10 percent 'tribute' on the invoiced value of the imported equipment from the dealers themselves. The Indian Telegraphy Act gave the British government sole right to the establishment, maintenance, and operation of wireless apparatus (For a detailed discussion of the ITA, see Gaur, K.D. (1990). Law of Telecommunications and Broadcasting in India. California Western Law Review, 27, pp. 137-158). Hence the collection of licence fees became cumbersome and problematic. During the 1930s, AIR set up stations for rural audiences in the North West Frontier Province, established the Central News Organization or the New Services Division, and began broadcasting to foreign audiences in Afghanistan, West Asia, and South East Asia. Program content was primarily news, information and educational programs, and the Vividh Bharati Commercial Service consisting of primarily film songs, folk and devotional music, was started in 1952 to combat film music broadcasts from Radio Ceylon's Commercial Service. Despite the Chanda Committee's recommendations, commercial sponsorship on the main News Services Division channel began only in 1982.

governments in the country. Using the Application Technology Satellite (ATS-6), programs were beamed to 2,400 villages in six states (Chatterji, 1991).

This experiment, called the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment or SITE, was launched primarily to educate people in rural areas on agriculture, health, and sanitation, and to provide supplementary lessons for primary school students. A second objective was to foster national unity among various linguistic, religious, and political groups (Mody 1978, 1979).

SITE was considered by the Indian government to be a "statement of faith - that technology could bring in a process of interaction to unite a vastly diversified nation, evolve an Indian definition of the democratization of the means of communication, and establish a harmonious blend of an ancient culture with an innovative new technology (Rao, 1987, p. 177). Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, the head of the Atomic Energy department who signed the agreement with NASA to launch SITE, said, "If India wants to reduce the overwhelming attraction of immigration to cities, enrich cultural life, integrate the country by exposing one part to the cultures of other parts, involve people in the programme of rural, economic and social development, then the best thing to do is to have TV via satellite" (Chatterji, 1991, p. 91).

While SITE is a landmark in Indian television history and in international development communication efforts, the experiment was not viable because of inherent flaws in the experiment and poor follow-up projects. First, the experiment was operated by three authorities. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) was responsible for the technology and software, Doordarshan was responsible for production and

dissemination of programs, and the respective state Department of Information was responsible for the service and maintenance of the television set in the villages of each state. Hence the operation of the experiment was not wholly supervised by any one authority. Second, the sets were set up in schoolrooms which often stored food grains. These attracted rodents that chewed through the wires. Third, the programs were dull and repetitive and failed to sustain audiences after the initial novelty wore off. Fourth, personnel to conduct lessons to complement transmissions, and technicians who were responsible for maintenance of television sets and connections were untrained (Rao, 1987). Finally, the location of sets was politically decided and in many cases, television sets were found clustered just off the main road within 25 km radius of an urban center (Chatterji, 1991).

After the SITE experiment, many viewers and technicians were absorbed into Doordarshan (Rao, 1987). Despite the lessons learned about the loss of audiences due to dull and irrelevant programming, Doordarshan continues to telecast such programs as Krishi Darshan to urban and rural areas alike, regardless of whether the message is pertinent or language familiar.

ETV or Educational Television is part of the SITE Continuity project and is broadcast on Doordarshan even today. The education and development objectives of ETV are supplemented by the countrywide classroom telecasts on Doordarshan. In 1984, the University Grants Commission (UGC) with the help of The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) launched the countrywide classroom program at first once, then after 1994, twice a day (Chatterji, 1991).

## The Early Debate on Media Autonomy

Besides the obvious function of Doordarshan for economic and social development, centralized control of this national network was an important political strategy for various ruling parties in the nation. Structures of power in the government overlapped those in the media with politicians and media personnel moving back and forth between government and media jobs. Thus, control from the central government was facilitated over the years through maintenance of a few in power -- whether in the media, or in the government, depending on the political environment at the time.

Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister and Congress Party President after Nehru's death in 1964. Gandhi used the broadcast media actively to block dissent and to construct an illusion of consensus (Mitra, 1993). For example, she pressured the All India Radio to cover her campaigns favorably through her party affiliate, I.K. Gujral, the Information and Broadcasting Minister at the time. When charged with corruption in 1975, Gandhi declared a National Emergency and suspended the operations of radio and television in the country (Bhatt, 1990).

When Gandhi's government fell in 1976, Morarji Desai, the leader of the opposition Janata (People's) Party was elected to power. Under his leadership, the Verghese Committee was formed in 1977 (headed by journalist B.G. Verghese) to explore the status and function of the All India Radio and Doordarshan. This commission recognized the hegemonic control of the media by the Congress Party and strongly recommended media autonomy. The report of this commission, called the Akash Bharathi report, lay the groundwork for the Prasar Bharati (Broadcast Corporation of

India) Autonomy Bill.

The Verghese Commission recommended that Doordarshan[17] and All India Radio function as two wings of an autonomous corporation headed by a chairman-cum-managing director or CMD. The CMD would be appointed by the President on the advice of 11 eminent citizens, including the Chief Justice of India and the Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission. The new corporation would still be funded by the government, and would regulate the public airwaves and frequencies in the public interest to ensure the protection of free and diverse speech and to prevent monopoly in the medium (Bannerjee, 1990, Chatterji, 1991).

The Prasar Bharati Bill

The proposal for media autonomy was represented by The Prasar Bharati Bill. It was introduced in parliament in March 1980, only to be rejected by Congress Party members, who were back in power. Indira Gandhi was assassinated in 1984, and television coverage of the five-day funeral ceremonies provided a space for a nationwide community of mourning. Rajiv Gandhi, who succeeded his mother as Prime Minister, used Doordarshan as a powerful public relations tool, and his administration spent around Rs. 600 crores (USD 15 billion) in five years to promote the image of the Congress Party through Doordarshan. Funeral shots of the assassinated Indira Gandhi were used extensively to gain sympathy votes and the younger Gandhi's activities were regularly telecast, as were controversial issues pertaining to the opposition. Scandals such as

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Doordarshan was separated from the All India Radio and brought under control of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry in 1975.

blatant booth-capturing by the Rajiv Gandhi administration in places like Amethi (Gandhi's constituency) received scant attention (Mitra, 1990).

Rajiv Gandhi's extensive use of the media backfired, however, when V.P. Singh, a member of the Congress Party, also became its biggest critic and exposed Gandhi's controversial relations with various capitalists and his involvement, most notably with the Swedish Bofors gun deals.[18] V.P. Singh left the Rajiv Gandhi government in 1989, and formed the National Front government through a coalition of various opposition parties, most notably, the BJP.

The Prasar Bharati Bill was revived in the late 1980s with the election of the National Front government. The National Front government was no different than the Congress Party in its use of television for party propaganda (DaCunha, 1990). Movie schedules were changed from those starring actors supportive of the Rajiv Gandhi administration to those supportive of the National Front administration (Bhatt, 1990).

The Prasar Bharati Bill was re-introduced on December 29, 1989, by P. Upendra, the Information and Broadcasting Minister under the National Front government. Upendra proposed a BBC-type charter for Indian broadcasting where it would have government funding but would function independently. While the 1979 Prasar Bharati Bill was accompanied by various restrictions binding the broadcast industry further to government control, the 1989 bill recommended government control only in the interest of the security of the state and in the public interest.

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18 Rajiv Gandhi was said to be paying huge amounts for the manufacture and purchase of these guns.

This bill also recommended the establishment of an independent broadcasting authority. However, the composition and function of this authority once again came under criticism for its superficial independence. This is because, as stipulated by the bill, the authority would be another bureaucratic organization consisting of members appointed by a committee consisting of the nation's vice president, the chairperson of the press council, and a representative of the president of India. Various provisions of the bill constructed a free hand for the government in drafting the duties of Broadcast Authority members and in accepting, modifying, or rejecting their recommendations (Bannerjee, 1990).

The authority would also be answerable to three authorities: The Central Government, the Broadcasting Council, and a two-member parliamentary committee. Several members of Doordarshan and All India Radio felt that under the Broadcasting Authority, influence on their functions would be more direct. Also, although the Prasar Bharati Bill was revised under the National Front government in the public interest, it was still an object of worry for journalists because it sanctioned the censorship of the broadcast industry in favor of an ambiguous 'public interest' (Jain, 1990).

Autonomy for the media therefore, meant autonomy only in theory and principle and not in practice because the media would still be run by the same power structure, only under a different name. Also, autonomy for television and radio meant autonomy for the chairperson of the corporation -- not for the producers, news editors, and creative directors within the industry (Karnik, 1989).

Although the National Front government re-opened the Prasar Bharati Bill issue

for debate and restructuring, the effort was futile, and the bill wasn't passed due to political instability. It is important to note, however, that control over the broadcast media has been regarded by various governments as a crucial strategy to sustain their positions in power. As Mitra (1995) writes, "Every government recognizes the effective role of television in maintaining the social-political bloc in power. During the National Emergency, Indira's government took this to its hegemonic extreme when the media were made completely ineffective by the government. Desai's party tried to liberalize it to some extent, as did the National Front, but their sincerity was always doubtful. Given the role that television could play in the social-political-cultural map, no government is willing to completely give up control" (p. 24).

The Congress Party came back into power in 1991, and again shelved the Prasar Bharati Bill and efforts for the autonomy of the broadcast media. The debate about media autonomy was still limited to a few politicians, media elites, and scholars of mass communication. The Prasar Bharati Bill and the media autonomy debate re-emerged in the latter 1990s when the government realized that a lack of legislation meant a lack of control over the booming television industry. The Prasar Bharati Bill was on the verge of being passed in August 1997, but was stalled again because of political instability in the United Front government, in power at the time.

In typical bureaucratic character, the government set up a committee, headed by Nikhil Sengupta, a former revenue minister, to draw up recommendations for a separate Broadcasting Bill to regulate the operations of private television channels. Thus, two parallel debates emerged in 1997 -- one was a revival of the autonomy issue, and the

other was concerned with regulation and licencing of private television channels. The recommendations of the Nikhil Sengupta committee were ignored. The debate didn't receive much importance because of its irrelevance for the current media environment. First, in the climate of liberalization, Doordarshan and All India Radio were no longer monopolies. Second, although the bill would free All India Radio and Doordarshan from government manipulation, these units would still be under parliamentary control where the 15-member Prasar Bharati Corporation would be accountable to a 22-member parliamentary committee, a broadcasting council, and the Information and Broadcasting Ministry itself. Thus, members of parliament could propagate programs about their constituencies on Doordarshan. Finally, merging of Doordarshan and All India Radio would mean considerable work because the two had, over the decades, become sprawling, messy, bureaucratic administrations. All India Radio now consists of 187 stations and 297 transmitters while Doordarshan has 19 channels, 41 production centers, and 834 transmitting stations. Also, both media had a number of employees not altogether necessary for their functioning (Chatterjee, 1997; Bhandare, 1997).

Despite assertions that the Prasar Bharati Corporation and the Broadcasting Authority would be accountable to parliamentarians and not the government of the day, personnel in Star TV and Zee TV, most prominently, recognized that powerful ties among politicians and media personnel translated into increased control rather than autonomy (Chatterji, 1997).

In a meeting of the Union Cabinet on January 27, 1997, the basic issues concerning liberalized television in India were underlined. Swami (1997) summarizes

these issues. First, the Prasar Bharati Corporation would consist of 6 part-time members, an executive member, a finance member, and a general member. Second, the Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1885 was deemed redundant and inadequate for the governance of broadcasting media. Third, the entry of private and foreign television broadcasting was discussed to be a matter of choice. That is, just because private channels were already beaming signals across the border didn't mean they couldn't be regulated in terms of restrictions on down linking and impositions on dish antenna licences. Fourth, the Cabinet decided that the choice of allowing private and foreign broadcasting in India should come with the awareness that this broadcasting could also mean the entry of "powerful economic, commercial and political interests, which may not prove beneficial to (the) free speech right(s) of the citizens" (p. 114). Finally, the proposed Prasar Bharati Act stated that "The central government may, from time to time, as and when the occasion arises, issue the Corporation such directions as it may think necessary in the interest of sovereignty, unity and integrity of India or the security of the State or preservation of public order, requiring it not to make a broadcast on a matter of public importance specified in the direction" (p. 70).

Although this sounded like blatant censorship, Information and Broadcasting officials stressed that such occasions would be decided entirely by members of the board and not the government (although, as mentioned earlier, there may be strong ties between the two). This sudden rush to pass the almost 20-year-old Prasar Bharati proposition was because, as a senior Information and Broadcasting official put it, "By then, an autonomous Doordarshan, capable of responding to market forces without sacrificing its

public service broadcasting goals, will be in a position to hold its own in a competitive environment" (cited in Chatterjee, 1997, p. 70).

As we shall see later in this chapter, the debate shifted from the question of media autonomy to the question of greater control over Doordarshan and cable and satellite television.

Divided Nation, Diverse Television

While the Prasar Bharati Bill was being debated or shelved by various parties in power, the television industry was making great advancements in the technology and production of television sets. The domestic manufacture of television sets in the mid-1970s led to the increase in purchase of television sets in middle and upper class urban homes and decrease in community viewing. Doordarshan now had to provide programming that would appeal to urban and rural viewers -- a task it grapples with even today (Mitra, 1993).

With the Asiad Games in 1982, color television was introduced, making coverage of the games the biggest national and international project of Doordarshan and the most widely watched series (Doordarshan 1996). The Asiad also shifted focus from educational programs to sports and entertainment. Several other genres such as information-based talk shows, quiz programs, entertainment-education programs for children, film song and sports programs emerged in the mid-1980s (Mitra 1993).

In 1984, a second metro channel (DD-2) featuring more entertainment was added to the metropolitan centres of Delhi, Bombay, and Madras. With the installation of the second satellite INSAT - 2B (in addition to INSAT - 1D and INSAT - 2A), several more

cities received these programs (Doordarshan, 1995).

At this time, Doordarshan experimented with entertainment-education programs based on the success of such Mexican telenovelas as Miguel Sabido's "Simplemente Maria" (Brown and Singhal, 1990). Telenovela-inspired "Hum Log" (We People), consisting of 156 episodes, ran for 17 months in 1984-85 and tripled Doordarshan's advertising revenue (Singhal and Rogers, 1988). Realizing the potential for serialized drama, various serials emerged in the latter half of the 1980s. The network recognized that entertainment-education programs could meet its education and development objectives, bridge the gap between rural and urban programming, and draw additional capital. Thus, it encouraged sponsorship for subsequent soaps like "Buniyaad" and "Khandhaan" (Pathania, 1995).

The differentiation of television programming in the mid-1980s is attributed to increased commercial sponsorship for entertainment-oriented programming, availability of a variety of products on the Indian market due to attempts at economic liberalization, and to increasing product awareness and purchasing power of middle class consumers. Mankekar (1993) writes, "There was a mutually reinforcing relationship between the spread of consumerism, the cultural and political constitution of the middle class and the introduction of entertainment serials on Doordarshan. In a dramatic shift, the government's goal of promoting national development through educational television gave way to entertainment serials framed (and usually underwritten) by commercials" (p. 92). The tendency of advertisers to sponsor entertainment-oriented over development programs led to the increase in the former and shift in focus of the network from

development to entertainment (Mankekar 1993; Ninan (1985). Market research surveys conducted in various cities profiled middle class consumers as professionals, government employees, small scale entrepreneurs, and wealthy farmers with annual household incomes between Rs. 16,000 (USD 400) and Rs. 75,000 (USD 1,867) (Mankekar, 1993).

## Programs for Unity

Political tension in various parts of the country (particularly in Punjab and Kashmir) accelerated by the rivalry between the Congress Party and the coalition of parties under the National Front set the stage for television serials which dealt with themes of unification. Such serials as "Tamas" (a secular nationalist program) and "Param Vir Chakra" (a military nationalist program) dealt with themes of separation and tension in families living on the borders of the nation (Mankekar, 1993).

Ninan (1995) writes, "Punjab and Kashmir, both states in which Indian unity was severely tested, became the focus for single-minded propaganda through fiction and non-fiction....Telefiction on Hindu-Sikh amity, Hindu-Muslim amity, on intrafamilial conflict on account of divided loyalties to the state to the secessionists, became so prolific as to become a genre in itself" (p. 3).[19]

Doordarshan began broadcasting nationalistic advertisements in addition to its standard fare of news programs, dances, and plays representing various regions of India.

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19 Ninan's book, Through the Magic Window, provides a description of the Indian television environment after economic liberalization in 1991. While some of the facts provided are useful for reconstructing the recent television context, the heavy reliance on anecdotes in newspapers and in magazines, sweeping generalizations about television consumption, and questionable connections between production and consumption of television, reduce the book's credibility.

As a strategy to reinforce themes of national (Hindu) identity, Doordarshan sanctioned the telecast of the two Hindu epics, the "Ramayana"[20] and the "Mahabharatha."[21] The narratives of the "Ramayana" and the "Mahabharatha" lent themselves to serialization, and the actors in these epics were revered on and off screen.

Rajagopal (1995) writes that the patriarchal narratives of loyalty to father, brother, uncle, king, and son in the "Ramayana" connected the modern bourgeois public sphere to pre-existing narratives of community. He says that narratives of community are used by post-colonial society as a strategy of resistance to capitalism. Rajagopal writes, "In the colonies, however, such as India, natives were granted subjecthood but not citizenship, since colonial powers were not likely to endure as elected rulers. The option of constructing collective identity within the domain of bourgeois social institutions therefore, did not exist. Indians under the Raj resorted to narratives of community, narratives that were pre-capitalist, indeed anti-capitalist, often stressing spiritual rather than civic identity" (p. 462).

Doordarshan thus straddled the public sphere of the modern nation with its narratives of egalitarianism and progressiveness and the public sphere of popular culture that includes commercial films, street and folk theater and television soap operas. The broadcast of "Ramayana" within the Indian context of uneven development and its myths of community, were to be received and accommodated even as the nation moved towards

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[20] The Ramayana is the story of the Hindu god, Rama.

[21] The Mahabharatha is the story of a battle between the five Pandava brothers (aided by the Hindu god Krishna) and their thousand cousins, the Kauravas.

modernity and capitalistic society.

The telecast of the "Ramayana" went beyond the mere re-telling of the great epic through a popular commodity. The narration of the epic drew from the residues of folk theater and thus continued the tradition of the *jhanki*, or as Van der Veer (1995) calls them "tableaux vivants" (p. 176), as used in the theatre performance of the story of the life of Rama or Ram Lila. Van der Veer notes that just as Anderson (1991) attributes the imaginings of community to the rise of print capitalism, Doordarshan in India allowed millions to be connected in space and time to watch the "Ramayana."[22] The "Mahabharatha," with its focus on the feud between cousins, also set up powerful themes of unification. Struggles for linguistic[23] and caste[24] signification in various parts of the country set the context in which the "Mahabharatha" aired.[25]

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Van der Veer presumes that this created the sensation of "satsang" or a religious gathering. He does not address the composition of this gathering and this makes a dangerous and simplistic generalization that denies resistance by various audience members (particularly religious minorities) to the broadcast of these epics.

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At this time, linguistic differences provided the base for struggles and riots all over the country. While North Indians were pushing Hindi as the national language, various states in the south were asserting their state languages as superior to those of others.

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Riots based on caste came to a head in the late 1980s when the V.P. Singh government implemented the Mandal Commission where seats in various colleges were reserved for the backward classes. Students, particularly in North India, agitated against such reservations, and many Brahmin students immolated or hanged themselves in protest.

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The broadcast of the epics and their themes of Hindu unity ironically facilitated the Hindu chauvinism of the BJP. The BJP, as described earlier in Chapter 2, used the narratives of Hindu supremacy and Hindu nation to drive their Ram Janmabhoomi (birthplace of Rama) campaign for the acquisition of the Ayodhya temple in Northern India. This campaign became a symbol of their efforts to rebuild a Hindu nation.

Doordarshan continues its broadcasts of Hindu religious serials and, in early 1996, telecast the mini epic, "Shri Krishna" which, at the request of the Congress (I) government, switched from DD1 to the DD2 channel and thus repeated all its episodes in the process (Agarwal, 1996a). Doordarshan also brought several other religious serials such as "Om Namah Shivaya," "Shri Ganesh," "Krishna Katha," and "Veer Hanuman," which revolved around the Hindu gods Shiva, Ganesha, Krishna, and Hanuman, respectively (Agarwal, 1997b). The epic "Mahabharata" was also scheduled for rerun (Agarwal, 1997c).

## Early Years of Cable

Cable television[26] in India began in the mid-1980s, and provided a welcome alternative to the staid programming of Doordarshan. Cable television in 1984 meant little more than mere hookup of the television sets of a local community to a single enterprising VCR owner who would play, for a nominal fee, Indian films for the community. Cable services proved extremely lucrative business, and soon, neighborhoods in various cities obtained cable connections and received the latest films

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The cable system consists of essentially 3 components: the head end, the distributing system, and the house drop. At the head end, signals are received from far away television stations. These signals are processed to be sent to subscriber's homes. Cables buried or hung on telephone poles (as they were during cable transmission of the Gulf War in 1990), comprise the distribution system. The trunk cable or main cable branches off into several feeder cables that connect to individual subscriber homes. Amplifiers located on the trunk and feeder cables bolster the signal strength transmitted from the head end. Finally, the housedrop connects the feeder cable to the television set of the subscriber. Drops can be one-way or two-way where the signal can be sent either only from the head end to the subscriber television set, or from the subscriber television set to the head end set as well.

(many pirated versions) in addition to the dull weekly Doordarshan menu.

In the absence of any legislation governing their businesses, cable operators across the nation realized their activities would go unchecked for a long time, and many enterprising individuals joined the cable operating business at this time. It was in this context that the telecasts of the Gulf War through CNN reached television audiences in various cities.

Cable television took on new meaning during the Gulf War in 1990 when the Taj Hotel in Bombay installed a satellite dish on its rooftop to receive CNN's signals of the war. Bypassing legislation preventing them from laying ground cables, innovative entrepreneurs wired rooftops to bring audiences foreign programming for a small fee of Rs. 100 - 150 (around USD 2.60) a month for access. Although no formal regulation controls these operators yet, they are required to register and pay a 40 percent entertainment tax to the state (Crabtree and Malhotra, 1996).

Privatization of Indian television spawned tremendous business opportunities. Program software was in great demand and cable operators, freelance producers, and renters of television equipment, to name a few, wanted to be a part of the television program production frenzy. Many video parlor owners became cable operators when they realized there was a decline in demand for videos in favor of cheaper, better quality films through cable and television. Cable operators used locally manufactured satellite dishes to transmit satellite channels to the subscriber. These operators included, in the package of satellite channels to each subscriber, an exclusive channel for Indian movies.

The lack of government restraint and the availability of slick alternate

programming led to the increase of cable homes from about half a million to 15 million in just two years (from 1992 to 1994), and is expected to pass 50 million by the year 2000 ("General Instrument targets India," 1995).

## Star TV and Beyond

The establishment of STAR TV in 1991 in Hong Kong by Li Ka-Shing of Hutchison Whampoa and his son Richard Li, owner of the Pacific Central Group, coincided with India's June 1991 economic liberalization policy. Realizing the potential of the Indian market in the liberalized environment, Rupert Murdoch purchased 64 percent of STAR TV, which uplinks to ASIA SAT-1, and entered the Indian communications arena in 1993. Murdoch bought the remaining 36 percent of Star TV in July 1994 ("Murdoch buys balance," 1994).

In keeping with its policy of encouraging open investment and liberalized trade, the Indian government did not curb the flow of STAR TV channels such as MTV (now on the Doordarshan platform), Prime Time Sports and BBC World Service (Shields and Muppidi, 1996).

Li-Ka Shing and Richard Li sold the Hindi channel Zee TV for USD 5 million to Bombay industrialist Subhash Chandra in 1992. Murdoch became Chandra's partner in 1993 and acquired 50 percent of Asia Today Limited (ATL) which runs Zee TV. Zee TV channels are Zee TV, EL, Zee TV Cinema, and Music Asia. Zee TV also uplinked to ASIA SAT-1. The network provides an exhaustive menu of Hindi films and film songs to Asian audiences (Pathania, 1995). ATL also owns 50 percent of the Siticable network. Murdoch now owns 50 percent of ATL, which commissions a marketing company,

Ambience Space Sellers, to collect advertisements for the Zee TV network, and has a 50 percent share in EL, Zee TV Cinema and Siticable (Bhandare, 1997).

Star TV split its beam in 1994 into a northern one which catered to China, and a southern one specifically for the South Asia region. MTV left Star TV in 1994 and Star TV introduced Channel [V] which took on MTVs trademark programs such as the hour-long Hindi top-ten film-video countdown called "Oye MTV" (now called BPL Oye) and offers competition to MTV which re-entered the television scene in 1994, this time on the Doordarshan platform.

Star TV and Zee TV marketed themselves as crucial links between multinational corporations and consumers in the South Asia region. These networks were becoming a source of anxiety for Doordarshan because by 1993, the two satellite channels were estimated to enjoy a combined 20 percent of total television advertising in India. Advertising on these channels is five times less expensive than on Doordarshan and advertisements appear at intervals of 10-15 minutes during programs instead of the half-hour intervals on Doordarshan (Pathania, 1995).

## Focus on Consumerism

The coincidence of satellite television and the large-scale implementation of economic liberalization in India in the early 1990s (almost a decade after initial efforts to do so), led to renewed focus on the middle class consumer. While the focus in the 1980s was the urban consumer, in the 1990s the rural resident is fast becoming the object of market research. Market surveys show that the rural market growth rate is fast surpassing that of the urban market. Corporations such as Pepsi and Brooke Bond India Ltd, and

media networks such as Star TV and Zee TV use research agencies such as the Indian Market Research Bureau (IMRB) as an extension of their marketing services, and rely on them heavily for consumer profiles.

The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) reported from its survey of 300,000 households that "every second person in the countryside owns a bicycle, every fifth home has a black and white television set and a pressure cooker, every third household has a ceiling fan, and almost 70 percent of the rural population owns a mechanical wrist watch" (Sudhakar 1997, p. 16). For some durables such as bicycles, motorcycles, and radios, the rural markets have surpassed urban markets. Nearly 70 percent of households in lower and middle income groups have black and white television sets. Sudhakar (1997) writes, "the process of evolution of urban markets is being replicated in rural India. It does not matter whether one is peddling an international brand or a home-grown product. The smart marketer of today knows that the rough ride on the dirt tracks is worth his (or her) while. For, no one can stop the trend of product shifts which are driven by the force of consumer pull" (p. 16).

Awareness of the critical consumer led to renewed focus on differentiated programming. Doordarshan and the private television networks alike launched genre specific channels, such as Doordarshan's "Movie Club," Zee TV's "Zee TV Cinema" and Star TV's "Prime Sports." As Mullick (1995) puts it, "the viewer is getting increasingly selective, necessitating niche segmentation by programmers and advertisers alike. This has resulted in the focus shifting to niche-specific channels" (p. 13).

Increase in consumer-oriented programming also led to new genres in

programming, as discussed later in this chapter. Advertisers and program producers realized that to reach Indian urban and rural consumers, programs and commercials had to include cultural symbols that they could easily understand and identify with. Subtlety in televisual texts was out, brash humor was in.

Annuncio (1997) discusses why some products are a success in India while others fail miserably. Coke's market share slipped from 60 percent to 53 percent because of its low-key advertising. He writes:

> Pepsi, on the other hand, has clearly been a winner in India. Secret of success: a high-octane, ear-to-the-ground advertising strategy. Starting off with the East-West fusion -- (with) some ads dubbed in Hindi, Pepsi quickly transcreated its successful American ads using Indian stars -- Michael J. Fox (was) replaced by Aamir Khan, MC Hammer by Akshay Kumar[27] -- and then developed ads specifically for India, like the current freedom campaign. The brand was the first to use Hinglish -- that urban teenage argot mixing Hindi and English ("Yehi hai right choice baby"),[28] -- the first to carry its slogan in Tamil script on national television, and the first, in its current campaign for the mango drink Slice, to thumb its nose at pseudo-Yank Indians (p. 51).

Such hybrid advertising which draws from western (read American) and Indian icons to project a 'both here and there' image is extremely popular for the fluidity it awards the consumer who can, by consuming the product, partake in an international ritual although rooted in national place and time.

Various MNCs such as Baskin and Robbins, Kellogg, and Revlon are realizing, however, that hybrid advertisements alone do not attract consumers: price plays an important role (Jain, 1997). These MNCs are re-thinking their ad campaigns and product

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[27] Aamir Khan and Akshay Kumar are popular Hindi cinema actors.

[28] Translated, this slogan for Pepsi reads, "This is the right choice, baby."

pricing to draw Indian consumers. Annuncio (1997) summarizes that earlier, MNCs operated on the myth that India consisted of 250 million middle-class consumers who would be swayed by western advertising and imagery to pay high prices for big global brand names. What they are learning is that the size of the middle class is approximately 100 million. These consumers have a high price-value consciousness, are well-informed, and are not quick to upgrade or multiply possessions.

Star TV and Zee TV's success as business networks was recognized by politicians and entrepreneurs in various states in India. Many also recognized the potential of these networks for political propaganda. By 1993, private television production centres[29] were established in various state capitals. Thus SUN TV was established in Madras, Raj TV in Andhra Pradesh, and Asia Network in Trivandrum. Prevented from uplinking to government satellites, these networks uplink to RIMSAT (Doordarshan, 1995), and provide a wide variety of programming in regional languages, from Indian films and variety shows for entertainment, to serials and documentaries for education and development.

Private Regional Satellite Television Networks: Sun TV and Udaya TV

The most successful and notable of the private regional networks is Sun TV, a

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Many of the private regional cable channels have not proved viable. For example, former BJP MP J.K. Jain, owner of Jain TV (Joint American Indian Network) made his money renting out video vans to various parties regardless of his political loyalties. He used funds from non resident Indians to fuel his network in support of the BJP. However, this station collapsed due to lack of advertising revenue, despite Jain's airing of soft porn on the channel late at night in an attempt to raise audience ratings and keep the station afloat (Swami, 1996).

Madras-based network, which is controlled by Kalanidhi Maran, the nephew of Industry Minister Murasoli Maran and grandson of the family of Dravida Munetra Kazhagam (DMK) Chief, Muthuvel Karunanidhi (Paneerselvan, 1997). The success of Zee TV and Star TV and the use of the Hindi language in these programs sparked his interest in a Tamil language channel for primarily the people of Tamil Nadu. Sun TV was the first regional language network in India and is extremely popular with its hefty menu of Tamil films, plays, and game shows.

When Sun TV first went on All India Radio in 1993, the network was regarded to be a mere extension of DMK propaganda. Even the network's symbol, a rising sun, is synonymous with the party's poll symbol. However, a shrewd Kalanidhi created "Neru-K-Ner (Face to Face)" a current affairs program where various political leaders were pitted against each other in political debate. Though vocal about his staunch support of the DMK, Kalanidhi believes that his network is apolitical, and is primarily a channel for entertainment.

After initial hitches with satellite uplinking and sluggish ad revenue, Sun TV has become a formidable television force in South India and Sun TV news was rated the highest in the south by the Indian Market Research Bureau in 32 consecutive weeks from mid 1996 to mid 1997. Kalanidhi entered an arrangement with Singapore Cable Vision for 24-hour transmission and launched Udaya TV in Bangalore under the leadership of his uncle Murasoli Selvan. He bought majority stakes in Gemini TV from the Gemini Group of Hyderabad, and is planning to launch a few other channels such as a Malayalam language channel in association with the Matrubhoomi group in Kerala, and a Hindi

channel in association with industrialist Sudhir Mehta (Paneerselvan, 1997).

Kalanidhi signed a contract with Star TV for the latter to carry all Sun TV channels on its DTH platforms. Although Sun TV owns rights to several recent films, it is unable to broadcast these because of a ban imposed by former Chief Minister and ex-cinema actor Jayalalitha, who controls JJ TV. The Jayalalitha government imposed the ban to avoid conflict with the movies broadcast on its own JJ TV network ("New dimension to cable war," 1995).

Udaya TV was started in 1994 with a strong commitment to establishing an alternative space for Kannada culture and tradition in Karnataka. Srinath, a veteran Kannada actor, now vice president of programming for the channel, and Vijaykumar, its general manager, realized in 1994 that apart from the institutional voice of Bangalore Doordarshan, Kannadigas had no access to local news and entertainment. Also, the success of Sun TV in Madras was evident in audience ratings for news and entertainment shows there. Thus, Udaya TV was started with objectives similar to those of Sun TV, and strived to cater to Kannada speaking audiences through innovative news and entertainment shows. Udaya TV's presence in Bangalore has not been as pervasive as Sun TV's in Madras because Bangalore is a cosmopolitan city comprised of people of various linguistic and regional backgrounds.

The goals, objectives, and struggles of Udaya TV however, are important in this analysis of the competing frameworks of meaning provided by transnational, national, and regional networks in Bangalore. Udaya TV's definitions of nation, audience and network identity are critically examined in the next chapter, within the context of

differing definitions of the same provided by the other networks.

The lucrative satellite television business has drawn publishing houses as well into the competition. Khanna and Braganza (1995) write, "Indian media owners, ensconced for years in rigidly-controlled empires, have suddenly discovered the virtues of the stock market, or at least, the fact that foreign financial institutions (FII) have cash to spare (p. 140). Thus, Business India magazine started BiTV in July 1995, and Hindustan Times newspaper, in a Rs.100 crore joint venture with UK-based Pearson and Hong Kong-based TVB Holdings, began buying cable networks in mid 1995. These media houses have gone public to generate more financing for their media ambitions.

BiTV enlisted cable operators to carry its channel even before it was launched, to ensure viewership and advertising revenue. BiTV was the first of publishing house-sponsored networks, and began its news (TVI News) and entertainment (TVI Prime) to extend the "free press" ideology to broadcasting.

Other examples of cross-media ownership are The Times of India's Times TV and Times FM, and the Mid-Day newspaper's Radio Mid-Day. The Hinduja group has operated in reverse and has moved from cable to television to print. Cross-media ownership is an attractive strategy because, Arathoon (1995) writes:

> For one, big cheese advertisers are increasingly hankering for multi-media and multi-country ad deals. As these advertisers' areas of operation widen and media costs escalate, economies of scale become all important. Cross media buying could hence show the way, since the bulk-purchase of ad space and time is often implicit in such 'single-point' buying. This translates to 'consolidated media packages' and some substantial cost benefits (p. 1).

The repetition of brand name and image across media enhances audience

recognition and recall. Both media personnel and advertisers realize, however, that first a cultural synergy among audiences is necessary before commercial synergy among different media is evaluated. Brand names and media networks need to be a part of the cultural ethos of the viewing community for cross-media ownership and advertising across media to be profitable. The disadvantage of cross-media ownership as some media houses are finding out, is that there is an increased cost in media usage and advertisers are reluctant to pay incremental fees for the addition of a weak medium to a favorable media package (Arathoon, 1995).

## The Cable Operators

In the battle among the state and private cable and satellite networks for advertisers and consumers, the cable operator performs a crucial role. The cable operator provides a direct link between television networks and cable subscribers. Cable operators have a relatively free hand in the running of their operations. As Pheroza Bilimoria, marketing director of BiTV explained, the government was reluctant to impose restrictions on such operations because cable operators were powerful entities who controlled the distribution lines (cited in Crabtree and Malhotra, 1993). Besides, many operators are related to politicians and thus have a certain degree of power and control. With instability in the government during the early 1990s, regulation of cable operations was not a top priority.

With the lack of government regulation, cable operators felt it necessary to systematize the chaotic cable industry. The problems were two-fold: cable operators were

finding it too expensive to run independent operations,[30] and there was no defined system of distribution for the development of subscriber bases. To alleviate these problems, cable operators merged businesses and became franchisees of distribution networks launched by Zee TV and the Hinduja group in early 1995 (Agarwal, 1995a).
Thus, they have reconfigured the chaotic cable industry by implementing integrated cable distribution systems.

Cable subscribers in each metropolitan area are now served by one of three cable distribution systems: The SitiCable network[31] (started by Zee TV), the InCable Network[32] (started by the Hinduja Group and the Mauritius-based IndusInd Media), and the UBN Network (started by a Madras based industrial family). These distribution systems are

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Independent cable operations are financial nightmares with initial control room equipment costing between Rs. 10-30 lakhs (USD 250-750 thousand) and distribution infrastructure such as cable amplifiers costing between Rs. 500-1000 (USD 12.5-25) per subscriber. A subscriber base of at least 20,000 to 25,000 homes is necessary for an independent cable operator to survive.

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The Siticable network covers around 70 cities and towns and is the largest cable network in the country. It controls nearly 60 percent of cable operations through approximately 45,000 cable franchisees across the country (Mullick, 1997)

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InCable Network was launched in Delhi in August 18, 1996 and delivers more than 35 channels to its subscribers. The network has already seen an investment of more than Rs. 500 crores (USD 12.5 billion). Its city specific channel (called InDelhi, InMumbai, or InBangalore, as the case may be), is extremely popular with viewers and advertisers. InCable in essence, laid the structure for cable distribution networks and city specific channel programming for the two other mega networks: Siticable and UBN. InCable has introduced various broad band services such as telephony, video-conferencing, home shopping, pay-per-view, and computer networking. InCable also provides its subscribers with set-top converters so they can receive up to 99 satellite and cable channels as opposed to the 8-16 channel capacity of their television sets.

managed by head-end operators in each city. The head-end operators make use of the services of cable operators who have already established viewing communities in various neighborhoods, and recruit these operators as franchisees in exchange for a monthly fee. Thus, a cable operator who is a franchisee for either SitiCable, InCable, or UBN, can now offer his or her clientele a menu of Star TV, Zee TV, two channels of Doordarshan (as part of Doordarshan's must carry rule), and a package of private regional channels, based on the demands of the clientele. Each distribution system also offers a channel of specific local programming. Thus, for example, InCable's Bangalore channel is called In Bangalore and brings its viewers news specifically from the Bangalore City.

## The Changing Face of Doordarshan

To combat the diverse and attractive programming from the cable and satellite channels, The Government Planning Commission of India urged Doordarshan to increase its sources of revenue and audience reach. To a large extent, Doordarshan dropped its social development focus and became an aggressive consumer-oriented channel. It obtained sole rights to broadcast national sports and music events, and invited private producers from all over the country to join its ranks. While Doordarshan has been criticized for its compromise on social objectives in favor of consumerist ones, it has also been praised for its quick response to competition from private channels (Bamzai, 1995). In 1995, Doordarshan entered an alliance with CNN[33] in return for a USD 1.5 million fee

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Plans to introduce CNN on Doordarshan were met with controversy. Doordarshan and Turner International debated the transmission of 24-hour CNN programming through a transponder on Insat 2B on Doordarshan's platform. Doordarshan in return would gain financially from this partnership and would also receive a five minute news window on

and a 50-50 sharing of the revenue. Viacom (the parent company of MTV), Time Warner (parent company of HBO), BBC Prime, and ABC/Capital Cities' ESPN quickly followed suit and have signed either flat fee or revenue-sharing contracts with the Indian behemoth. Even Murdoch's sports-and-movie formula has been sidelined by Doordarshan's more-sports-and-more-movies formula.

Doordarshan paid USD 5 million for terrestrial broadcast of the 1996 cricket World Cup, and major contenders such as Star TV's Prime Sports and ABC/Capital Cities' ESPN could only bid for Doordarshan's release of satellite transmission of such events. Star TV Movies is also up against stiff competition with Doordarshan in the film arena because the latter not only owns rights to various Indian movies, but has acquired films from TNT and the Cartoon Network as part of its alliance with CNN.

Rathikant Basu, then Director-General of Doordarshan, said in this context:

> Doordarshan's two strategic objectives are being taken care of. As guardians of the country's cultural code, we knew we couldn't control the outsiders. So through the Insat platform, we've given ourselves the leverage to exercise our moral right. Also, we're interested in safe-guarding our advertising revenue (currently at Rs. 560 crores or USD 14

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CNN's world report. Various members of Parliament said Doordarshan was signing India away by giving CNN editorial clout over its news capsules despite CNNs repeated claims to steer clear of comment on the news from individual countries. To add to the tension, CNN opened its news report on India by showing cattle on the street, reinforcing the stereotypical underdeveloped rural image, and showed Kashmir as not a part of India, an area which is the subject of prolonged tension between Pakistan and India. BBC's entrance on Indian television was also not without blunders. The news service mixed up pictures from Kashmir and Chechnya in one of its first telecasts, showed the Taj Mahal in Varnasi instead of Agra, and called the prime minister of Nepal Manmohan Singh instead of Manmohan Adhikari (Manmohan Singh was the finance minister of India in the early 1990s). These goof-ups led to criticism from Indian officials that BBC was partial to Pakistan and biased against India (Agarwal, 1995a).

> billion) which we will do through revenue-sharing deals. We also manage to influence the quality of their programming (cited in Bamzai 1995, p. 16).

Doordarshan maintains its monopoly status because of its sheer reach and infrastructure, but officials in various networks recognize that the cable operator is the most important factor in bringing their channels to the subscribers. While Doordarshan's must-carry rule ensures that at least two of its channels reach every cable television subscriber, the private channels compete for carriage because 95 percent of operators can offer their clients only 12 channels, although that number is increasing (Bamzai, 1995).

In 1995, Doordarshan increased the frequency of its film-song broadcasts, and launched its Movie, International, and Metro Channels, all without adequate finances or long-term planning (Agarwal, 1996c; Velloor, 1995; Agarwal, 1995b). Similar to those of STAR TV, Doordarshan now carries the Entertainment Channel, the Music Channel, the Business and Current Affairs Channel, the Enrichment Channel, and the Sports Channel (Pathania, 1995; Shields and Muppidi, 1996).

Despite the seeming profitability of the cable and satellite television business, television advertising is not on the rise because the increasing number of channels makes its viability unstable. Mullick (1995) reported that while the amount spent on television advertising was Rs. 750 crore in 1994, it was expected to rise 20 percent in 1995 while the number of channels was expected to increase by 50 percent. P. Mitra (1997) reports that in 1996, money spent on television advertising rose 34.5 percent, yet this is a modest increase since no new channels were launched in 1996. This is in contrast to 1995 where

such major entertainment channels as Sony and Home TV were launched. This is bad news for small private channels because, as N. Bhaskara Rao, chairperson of the Centre for Media Studies puts it, "The reason why small channels have been left with only a small share of the ad-pie is because of increasing fragmentation in the relatively small satellite channel market" (p. 13). Advertisers recognize the profitability of plugging their products on Doordarshan and the network enjoys an advertising revenue far greater than any of the other networks.

Doordarshan still enjoys monopoly status as an economy of scale. It now has three national channels, two special interest channels, nine regional channels, and an international channel. It reaches 86 percent of the population through a network of 750 terrestrial transmitters, and earns USD 12.3 million annually.

## Financing of Television Networks

Doordarshan is funded partly by the government (60 percent), and partly through commercial sponsorship (40 percent). Of total ad revenue, the northern regional Doordarshan kendras (stations) in Delhi, Lucknow, and Jalandhar network 8 percent of ad revenue. Commercial rates depend on the type of program and the time in which it is telecast. Program type and time is categorized into Super A (very popular), A Special (film-based programs or Hindi serials), Special (Hindi serials), Time A (new programs or popular repeats). Sixty-second spot rates for Doordarshan-produced serials are Rs. 70,000 (USD 1,750),[34] Rs. 60,000 (USD 1500), Rs. 25,000 (USD 625), and Rs. 15,000 (USD 375) for these program types on the national network, respectively. Rates are

[34] At the time of this writing, the exchange rate was USD 1 = Rs. 40.

slightly higher for programs on the metro channels. Advertisers on Doordarshan are those of soaps, toothpastes, television sets, detergents, textiles, shampoos, corporate services (banking, legal, etc.), two-wheelers, detergent cakes, and cosmetic oils (Doordarshan, 1996).

Udaya TV, Star TV, and Zee TV depend solely on advertising revenue. Figures for advertising spots on Udaya TV were inaccessible. For Star TV and Zee TV, advertising rates were based, as in Doordarshan, on program type and time. For example, 30 second spots on Star TV costs around Rs. 120,000 (USD 3,000).[35] Star TV's five channels makes advertising on this network more profitable because the Star TV Plan includes nine spots on DD1, 19 spots on DD2, five spots on Zee TV, 60 spots on Star TV Plus, and 50 spots on Star TV Movies for a total of 143 spots. Without the Star TV Plan, an advertiser would obtain only 13 spots on DD1, 24 on DD2, and seven on Zee TV for a total of 44 spots. Rates for these spots fall between Rs. 100,000 (USD 2,500) to Rs. 90,000 (USD 2,250) per 10 second spot.

Zee TV similarly divides its ad rates according to program type and time. Zee TV offers ten second spots during Special shows on DD1 and DD2 for around Rs. 65,000 - Rs. 135,000 (USD 1,625 - 3,375) and during Super A shows for anywhere between Rs. 1,05,000 - Rs. 1,10,000 (USD 2,750 - USD 2,625). Programs on the Zee TV channel cost less at Rs. 60,000 (USD 1500) and Rs. 75,000 (USD 1,875) for 10 second spots.

As stated earlier, the increased commercialization of Doordarshan was criticized

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35 Star TV's vice president of sales in Bangalore said that fees were most often paid in US dollars because the dollar's value was steadier than that of the rupee.

by various political opposition parties and interest groups alike. The success of private television channels and cross-media ownership were issues of concern for the government. Thus, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry drafted a Broadcast Bill to regulate television programming and cross-media ownership.

## The Broadcast Bill

Earlier legislations for the regulation of content on cable and satellite television were to a large extent, ineffective, because they recommended and not mandated content guidelines. For example, the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Bill introduced in Parliament in 1993, was passed as The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act in 1995, and required all cable television networks to be registered. It stipulated a "must carry" rule in that all cable operators should Rehmatullah-transmit, unaltered, at least two Doordarshan channels. Cable operators must use standardized equipment, and program content must keep up with the national objective of communal harmony.

The Act condemned objectionable content yet did not prohibit it (The Cable Television Networks Act 1995, 1997). Thus, satellite and cable channels had ample room to negotiate around this ordinance. The Indian General Rules of Conduct for TV and Radio Advertising also urged advertisers not to offend morality, decency and religious sentiment, but did not require them to do so (Pathania, 1995).

The Information and Broadcasting Ministry hastily set up a Broadcasting Authority (BA) in an attempt to control the growth of the booming television industry. The basic stipulations of the BA are that broadcasting services should cover a wide range of preferences, be in good taste, broadcast nationwide, and be provided in an environment

of free competition. The Broadcast Bill divided broadcasting services into seven categories: terrestrial radio broadcast, terrestrial television broadcast, satellite radio broadcast, domestic satellite television broadcast, DTH (direct-to-home) broadcast[36] and local delivery network such as cable services.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a Broadcast Bill which addressed regulation and autonomy was drawn up by the Nikhil Sengupta committee. The committee acknowledged that state monopoly over electronic media had given way to a laissez-faire situation. The report said, "whether or not a government permits a foreign satellite channel uplinking facilities in its territory, it is simply impossible to prevent the same channel from beaming its programmes directly into homes in (this) country" (cited in Muralidharan & Rajalakshmi, 1996, p. 94). The real issue was disciplining the operation of these channels rather than controlling them. The report did not receive much endorsement from other parliamentarians, especially the then Information and Broadcasting Minister, C.M. Ibrahim, who was set against allowing uplinking to Indian satellites by any foreign broadcaster, although he was somewhat favorable to allowing such privileges to private Indian broadcasters. In early 1997, the government issued notice that it would make the Broadcast Bill operational by September 15, 1997 (Bhandare & Joshi, 1997).

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36 DTH eliminates the necessity of the cable operator to a certain extent. Through this technology, scrambled signals are beamed directly to home television sets which are then unscrambled by a decoder in the television set. The quality of DTH transmissions is very high, and to receive such transmissions, the viewer needs a satellite dish, a digital satellite receiver, a smart (decoder) card, and a remote control.

The Broadcast Bill was drafted to mandate licenses for the ownership of ku-band dishes and thus regulate DTH transmissions.[37] The Bill mandates that: a) private broadcasting is allowed from Indian companies (although these companies may contain foreign equity between 25-49 percent); (b) an independent broadcasting authority established by the government will give licences to broadcasting companies; (cable) only two players at the national level and two each in each regional/language level will be given DTH licences; (d) broadcasters operating without a licence are liable to penalty; (e) a minimum of two cable operators per telecommunication circle will be given cable franchises; (f) local, regional, and national radio and television stations will be given licences; (g) a person or company with a broadcasting licence for operating a local, regional, or national radio or television station cannot own more than 20 percent of any other broadcasting company individually and 15 percent in the aggregate; and (h) newspaper owners with over 20 percent ownership in the above ventures cannot have a licence for any radio or television stations.

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Star TV invested USD 80 million in DTH technology and was poised to launch its 40 channel DTH platform. On July 16, 1997, the DoT banned DTH services until it drew up a licensing and regulation plan, leaving officials and Star TV viewers at the mercy of unprofessional, low-quality cable service. Thus, DoT's move was a strategy to thwart Star TV TVs plans to launch DTH broadcasting from March 1998. The DoT couched its DTH ban in protectionist rhetoric and said that it was acting in the interests of vulnerable citizens who would be exposed to uncensored programs beamed directly from a foreign station. Star TV counsel Kapil Sibal said the network channels on the DTH platform "were substantially the same as those that already exist on the cable-band and the addition of a few educational, children's channels as well as money and news channels would in no way pose any threat to national security (cited in Chatterjee, 1997, p. 68). However, the DoT stood firm, and interestingly enough, invoked the draconian Indian Telegraph Act of 1885 and the Indian Wireless Telegraph Act (which the DoT was in the process of amending), to declare its supreme position in regulating broadcasts.

The conditions of this Bill sparked chaos and frustration among various broadcasters and newspaper people. For example, if the Bill was passed, Zee TV would not be able to continue its SitiCable network and the Hindustan Times newspaper would have to cut down its interest in the Home TV network from 30 to 20 percent. Sony TV would have to cut down its interests from 80 percent -- a rate already approved by the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (Bhandare, 1997).

Media barons like the Times of India vehemently protested the restrictions on ownership and licensing. They felt the limitations were based on U.S. and U.K. models where many cities have only one newspaper, a situation which could give rise to a monopoly of ideas. But in the Indian market where each city has a myriad newspapers, the rule was ridiculous and should be imposed only if a newspaper garners more than 25 percent of a particular market. Newspaper owners would be passed up in favor of other business people with no media experience to become owners of television stations. Thus, they felt, the Broadcast Bill would control more than it regulated. (Bhandare, 1997; Purie, 1997).

However, as many people recognized, several avenues were available for bypassing such legislation. For example, foreign broadcasters could start a front company in India to broadcast in the country and many could continue to operate as before because the legal action in the country is slow. Also, the ban on uplinking to Indian satellites by private and foreign broadcasters has proved meaningless. Earlier, Doordarshan's plans in mid 1996 to lease time-shares on its transponders for private broadcasters to telecast their programs did not pan out because of a lack of consensus in

the then United Front government. Private networks such as Sun TV, Asianet, and BiTV were in favor of such leases because they were paying as much as USD 25,000 a month to uplink to satellites from Russia, Philippines, Singapore, and Sri Lanka (Muralidharan & Rajalakshmi, 1996).

Private and foreign broadcasters could broadcast in India without legal complications as evident in BBC's broadcast of its Hindi language news program on Hindustan Times' Home TV channel. The BBC provides tapes of this news program to the Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (VSNL),[38] which transmits it to an uplinking station in Hong Kong. New Delhi Television's (NDTV) programs on Star TV and Zee TV are uplinked in the same manner. Thus unregulated use of the VSNL route defuses the government restriction on direct uplinking (Swami, 1997).

At the time of this writing, the Broadcast Bill was still under consideration in the Union Cabinet ("Broadcast Bill draft," 1997). Various cable operators and head end managers were apprehensive about the stipulations of the Broadcast Bill, and felt their days of unchecked enterprise may soon be over.

## The Trend Towards Hybrid Programming

It is obviously impossible to provide a summary of the different genres of

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38 The VSNL, controlled by state-controlled Department of Telecommunications provides International Data Dialling (IDD) services. VSNL links India to 237 countries, and has grown from providing one international line for every 2000 domestic lines to one for every 900. Value added services (VAS) account for two percent of the total revenue. VSNL has invested in transmission equipment, and has established three earth stations at Calcutta, Madras, and Dehradun. VSNL also provides connections to the Internet and has 1000 subscribers with nodes in Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, Pune, and Bangalore (Syngal, 1995).

programs on Doordarshan or on the private cable and satellite channels. However, it is safe to say that although in serious competition with one another, the networks carry similar programming through film-based programs, serials, and documentaries to snag the largest share of audience-consumers. Suroor (1995) writes, "If Zee TV is cloning the Bombay cinema, then Doordarshan is cloning Zee TV, and ATN and Jain TV are cloning both of them. The only difference is who packages it better." He cites Vinod Dua, an independent television producer who says, "Almost every channel is so similar that if you walk into the middle of a programme, you can't tell which is which" (p. 7).

Mullick (1995) attributes the lack of variety in programming to the fact that only a handful of software companies provide programs to these channels. Whether it is talk-shows, music and video countdowns, sitcoms, or dramas, Doordarshan and the cable and satellite channels strive toward a hybrid Indian/western identity. Anchorpersons and actors intersperse comments in the vernacular with those in English. Programming across channels largely imitate western shows and construct a character that is both Indian and Western.

<u>Film-based programs</u>

Film-based programming forms the bulk of television content across all networks. Film and music video countdowns, and film-music based game shows form new and popular genres on Indian television. Such shows as "Superhit Muqabala" (Doordarshan), "Philips Top Ten" (Zee TV),[39] "Boogie Woogie" (Sony TV) and "TVS Sa Re Ga Ma"

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[39] Zee TV was a pioneer in the concept of branded programming where the network would give branding rights to an advertiser in exchange for 52 weeks of booking. Thus was

(Zee TV) receive high audience ratings. These shows include film video countdowns and dance and singing competitions. VJs for these shows are carefully chosen and are usually young, talented, and from urban backgrounds. For example, the moderators of Asianet's "Sa Re Ga Ma," Sun TV's "Pattu Padava," and Zee TV's "Close-Up Antakshari" (film music-based game shows) are trained singers themselves (Nair 1997; Pinto, 1997), and most of the VJs on Channel [V] were born or brought up in England or the United States[40] (Manral, 1997).

These shows are immensely popular among expatriates in Nepal, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom as well. The producers of these shows are particular that their anchorpersons straddle both Indian and Western cultures and exude an international character. Chakravarthi (1995) writes that producers know that "an all-English veejay brings abysmal ratings while an all-vernacular veejay isn't hip enough for a country that generally worships English -- Hinglish, Gujlish, Tamlish, Anythinglish (their Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Tamil hybrids)" (p. 172). Freedom, concern for the environment, and respect for women are carelessly tossed around between film videos

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born such programs as "Surf (detergent) Wheel of Fortune," "Rasna (juice) Ek Minute," and "Close-Up (toothpaste) Antakshari." Doordarshan also began allowing program branding by the end of 1994.

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Star TV's Channel [V] is a pioneer in the desi (Indian)-Western hybrid programming. MTV, which resisted telecasting Hindi film and pop music, followed Channel [V]'s initiative when it re-entered the Indian television scenario in early 1996. While MTV targets 15-34 year olds, Channel [V] aims at all age groups. Also, Channel [V], as part of the Star TV platform is more widely received than MTV because the latter requires a high channel capacity television set.

and free floating skits[41] (Nair, 1997).

## Game Shows and Talk Shows

Western program formats provide fodder for Indian shows resulting in such programs as "Adarsha Dampathigalu" (similar to the "Newly Wed Game") on Udaya TV, "Good Morning India" (from "Good Morning America") on DD1, "Crime Stoppers" on DOORDARSHAN Metro, and "India's Most Wanted" on Zee TV (both based on "Cops") (Bhandare & Joshi 1997, p. 83).

Talk shows form another popular genre and Zee TV's "The Kiran Joneja Show" and "The Priya Tendulkar Show" have drawn high audience ratings for their candid discussions of women's issues, old age, marital relationships and so on. Some of these talk shows have also drawn sharp criticism because of their bold remarks on culture, tradition, and national identity.

For example, Star TV's "Nikki Tonight," was condemned by members of parliament because the host made disparaging remarks about Mahatma Gandhi. She was criticized for contributing "to the vulgarization of media and ... (to) the vandalization of our national culture" (Reddy, 1995). Members of Parliament from the opposing parties, the CPI (M), BJP, and the Janata Dal united in their protest of such remarks as belittling to the Indian national movement.

## Sitcoms and Soaps

Sitcoms flood prime time television. These programs retain the loud and lewd

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See for example, interview with MTV VJ Broacha in Fernandez, K. (1997, June 15). "Free your mind." The Times of India, p. 3.

humor of early Indian sitcoms such as Doordarshan's "Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi" (This is Life) in the late 1980s. "Mrs. Madhuri Dixit" on Zee TV and "Tu Tu Mein Mein" on Star TV Plus in 1997 draw upon the same brash slapstick techniques. A veteran writer for various dramas on national television says that loud and vulgar comedy is the comedy India audiences enjoy. Subtle humor like that of such British serials as "Yes Prime Minister" is still too alien for the average Indian ("Riotously Renuka," 1997).

Soap operas established their popularity in the Indian viewing community with the first telenovela-inspired "Hum Log" in 1983 on Doordarshan. Doordarshan carries four continuous hours of soaps from noon to 4:00 p.m. everyday, with 20 minutes of news in between. The new soaps launched in 1997 include "Aurat," "Aparajita," "Itihaas," and "Waqt ki Raftaar" in addition to 'Farz," "Yug" and "Swabhimaan" which were already in progress. An afternoon soap fetches an average of Rs. 2 lakh (USD 50 thousand) ad revenue, and receives high ratings.

Zee TV continues prime time soaps such as "Hum Paanch," "Tara," "Rahat," "Khana Khazana," "Khoobsurat," and "Mansi." Sony TV cashes in on afternoon ad revenue by telecasting feature films while Star TV Plus telecasts reruns of prime time shows. Doordarshan has a strong leadership on afternoon soaps because of its terrestrial reach to small towns where women are more likely to watch television in the afternoon, whereas private television channels are focused on urban areas where most of the women work outside the home (Jain, 1997).

Most soaps deal with standard elements such as adultery, rape, murder, AIDS, ambition, seduction, betrayal, and rage. Chandra (1996) writes:

> As new channels surface and existing ones increase telecast time, the need of the hour becomes authors who can write fast enough to feed the ravenous tube. The medium and the sizeable money is attracting major names and creating its own write stars. Novelists, journalists, lyricists, producers, directors, and Bollywood hacks are now also television writers. Pitted against neck-breaking deadlines, they are learning the art of teleplay and discovering a cruel truth: quality be damned, the only thing that matters are television rating points (TRP) ... unfortunately, the chaos of an immature industry combined with inexperienced craftsman has resulted in overwhelming mediocrity (p. 103-104).

The scramble for innovative programming containing a successful combination of sex, humor, and human drama, has led to criticism from, ironically, women's rights activists and patriarchal politicians alike. In mid 1995, the New Delhi High Court issued showcause notices to Zee TV, Asia TV Network, Star TV Plus, Jain TV, Udaya TV, and others for their indecent programs and lewd liquor and cigarette advertisements. The notice was based on a petition issued by the Jagritimahila Samiti, a voluntary woman's welfare organization based in Delhi. The petition said that "the game plan of the respondents is to have various programmes full of sex, to attract maximum viewership without caring about the effect and impact on the citizens especially youths, thereby spoiling the culture and ethos of the country. It is a matter of common knowledge that some programmes are full of sex, especially inserted, even though there is no requirement in the programmes" ("Delhi court issues," 1996, p. 3). The Samiti declared that all these channels depicted women in demeaning ways and were promoting such images of women both within the nation and without, by transmitting taped shows abroad.

## Indianization of Foreign Programming

Star TV soon realized that its primarily American programming was losing

audiences who favored programming in their own languages. Murdoch lured Rathikant Basu, the head of Doordarshan (once his bitter rival), to Star TV in mid-1996 (Agarwal, 1996c). With a phenomenal increase in salary, Basu set about creating a Hindi band by transferring Doordarshan serials to the Star TV Plus channel.[42] Basu also paved the way for censorship of private-produced news (such as New Delhi TV's news show, earlier telecast on Doordarshan), for Doordarshan's international channel, and for supervision of news and current affairs on Doordarshan, to the Star TV Network (Agarwal, 1996d).

Apart from all the controversies surrounding new programming genres, defiance of patriarchal constructions of womanhood and of moral behavior, private cable and satellite channels are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain a foothold in the competitive television arena. Even Doordarshan, with its reach and infrastructure, is finding its commercial revenue declining because of its down market image in cable and satellite homes. Thus, media watchers say, by the year 2000, India is expected to have about 100 channels of which at least 70 percent will be pay channels.[43]

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42 This created frustration among Zee TV officials (as mentioned earlier, Zee is a partner of Star TV) because the move to Hindization of Star TV was regarded as a threat to Zee's audiences and revenue for its own Hindi programming.

43 Pay television may be facilitated in two ways: First, cable operators can provide 'addressable' systems that allow the subscriber to access premium channels. This can be accomplished through a Rs. 4000 (USD 100) set top converter at the subscriber end and an investment of Rs. 4-5 lakh (USD 100-125 thousand) per channel for control room equipment at the operator end. Second, pay television is possible through DTH where the viewer would have to have a Rs. 20,000 (USD 500) personal dish to receive between 25-50 channels. This would also entail a basic subscription fee and additional premium channel fee. Such channels as Discovery, ABNi and MTV are finding it hard to survive on ad revenue alone and will most likely switch to pay channel mode as soon as it is technologically possible (See Agarwal, 1996e).

Basu's innovations on Star TV coincided with attempts to Indianize programs on private channels as well. In an attempt to increase audience ratings, private channels such as Sony TV and Star TV dubbed such English language serials as "I Dream of Jeannie," "Baywatch," and "The Simpsons," and movies such as "Jurassic Park" in Hindi. While dubbing serials is an economic answer to program production (a dubbed serial costs a network Rs. 20,000 or USD 500 while a new half-hour serial costs up to Rs. 5 lakhs or USD 125 thousand), the incongruity of western protagonists speaking Hindi failed to strike a chord with urban Indian audiences. Also, it isolated many audience members who did not understand Hindi, but understood English.

Audience ratings dropped even lower than those for their English counterparts. While Star TV dropped these versions 3 months after they were launched, Sony TV continues, losing audiences to other channels. The dubbing of serials in Hindi was an attempt of foreign broadcasters to foster an "international culture" (Sehgal, 1997, p. 1). Disney cartoons on Zee TV, based on the success of their Hindi-dubbed cartoons, planned on Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu versions as well (Bhandare, Joshi, & Mrdula, 1997).

## The Popularity of Hybrid Programming

By drawing on common cultural contexts, icons, and adorning them with an international flavor, hybrid programming is extremely popular because it offers audiences a space in which they can identify with their culture and at the same time be empowered by the progressive narratives of the anchorpersons. Thus there is a shift in location of power and this shift is key to our understanding of why hybrid programming draws high audience ratings. The sole presence of Doordarshan's educational and informative

programming before liberalization in 1991 reinforced notions of backwardness, of economic underdevelopment, and of socialist sluggishness. Programs aimed at the betterment of society constructed the nation as 'not yet there,' and as always having to catch up with the industrialized countries. Power was located in the developed countries, and the lifestyles, language, and opinions of western nations, particularly the United States (as a perceived trend-setter), and the UK (as a colonial godfather) were things to aspire to.

Hybrid programming after economic liberalization is an example of a keen sense of the cultural ethos of urban India. The availability of foreign products on the market, and the increase in international business and leisure travel have allowed the urban resident exposure to a variety of consumerist and lifestyle choices. Hybrid programming on television authenticates the local in its allusions to Indian film song, common foods, stereotypical northern and southern idioms and so on, and links it to an international sensibility so that audiences are empowered in their simultaneous valuation of local and global membership. As we shall see in Chapter 7, audiences overwhelmingly chose private cable television channels over Doordarshan and described the latter as boring, unsophisticated and full of irrelevant developmental messages. They preferred only certain programs on the national network which, like the cable channels, incorporated global and local themes in entertaining and not educative contexts.

In this chapter, I have discussed the history of television in India and have detailed the nature of the television environment after 1992. This discussion shows that the national network in the country was used as an ideological state apparatus by those in

power, to disseminate the image of a unified Hindu nation to audiences all over the country. After the advent of private channels, Doordarshan changed its programming and sought protection from competition from private channels through legislation. Although this network maintains its monopoly over the rural population because of its infrastructure, it is gradually losing hold in urban centers where audiences are increasingly seeking the empowering narratives of progress and consumerism in the slickly-produced programs of the satellite channels. This leads us to question the differing defintions of network and audience identity projected by these competing networks, and the impact these definitions have on audiences' perceptions of national identity.

# CHAPTER IV

# TELEVISION AUDIENCES IN THE GLOBAL CITY

In the first section of this chapter, I will discuss Bangalore city as a negotiated terrain between multinationals, immigrants to the city, and the natives themselves. Bangalore is poised to become a global city with plans underway to extend its domestic airport into an international one for the convenience of business travelers. With the expansion of the city into outlying villages, and exponential increase in population due to the job opportunities in the city, Bangalore itself becomes a commodity in the battle of appropriation among its users.

In the second section, I will explain the methods used in my fieldwork conducted in the summer of 1997. I will describe my ethnographic approach to the study of the political economy of television and cable networks in Bangalore in particular and in India in general. I will then discuss how I conducted participant observation and interviews in television audiences' homes. Throughout my discussion, I will pay special attention to issues of power between me, a returning native researcher, and my informants in the field.

## Historical Claims to the City

Bangalore is the capital of Karnataka State in South India (Appendix D), and lies half way between the east and west coasts of the southern Indian peninsula (Appendix E). The city is one of the most populated in the country, and has a high rate of literacy --

around 76 percent (See Table 1).

The Bangalore district consists of three taluks or primary areas: Anekal, Bangalore north, and Bangalore south. Bangalore city is part of Bangalore north and Bangalore south, with its area divided between these taluks. This study was conducted in the Bangalore urban district (Appendix F) which is a major center of commerce, banking, and industry in the country.[44] Historically Bangalore was ruled by both Hindu and Muslim rulers, and struggles to reassert the city's Hindu or Muslim origins are occasionally fodder for present-day communal riots.

Various Hindu dynasties ruled Bangalore from the 4th to the 16th century A.D.[45] The Gangas were the first dynasty who left records of their political rule in Bangalore from the 4th to the 10th century A.D. The Chola Dynasty occupied the region at the close of the 10th century only to be thrown out by the Hoysala Kingdom soon after. The Vijaynagar Empire succeeded the Hoysala rule and the encouragement of feudatories such as the Yelahanka Nada Prabhus (chieftains) called the Kempegowdas, led to the discovery of modern Bangalore in 1537 A.D. The Maratha Hindu commander Shahji

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[44] On August 15 1986, Bangalore District was divided into the Bangalore Rural and the Bangalore Urban Districts. The definition of "urban" used in the 1991 Census, as in the previous census surveys is as follows: (a) All places with a municipality corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee, etc. (b) All places with (I) a minimum population of 5,000, (ii) at least 75 percent of the male working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits, and (iii) a population density of at least 400 persons per square kilometre. See S.S. Bhandare and J.K. Mukhopadhyay (1995). (Eds). Statistical Outline of India: 1995-1996. Bombay: Department of Economics and Statistics.

[45] The history of Bangalore is explained in great depth in, Government of Karnataka (1990). Gazetteer of India: Karnataka State, Bangalore District. Bangalore: Lotus Printers.

Bhonsle of the Bijapur army invaded the south in the late 16th century and the Kempegowda chieftain presented Bangalore to Shivaji as part of his surrender.

Shahji Bhonsle's son, Shivaji, resided in Pune, near present-day Bombay, with his mother Jijabai. On his visits to Bangalore, Shivaji is said to have had plans to make Bangalore part of his Hindu empire. Thus the history of the Shiv Sena in Bombay has ties to Bangalore through the presence of the Maratha kings in the city in the 16th and early 17th centuries.

The Maratha kings were overthrown by the Muslim kings Haider Ali and his son Tipu Sultan in the mid 17th century. The British presence in India in the early 18th century led to the downfall of Tipu Sultan (an ally of the French colonialists), and the acquisition of Bangalore (as a part of Mysore territory) by the Hindu prince Krishnaraja Wodeyar III (then only 5 years old), as part of a strategy that would allow British administration and authority over Mysore.[46] Although the British supervised the administration of Mysore between 1831 and 1881 by appointing various commissioners, they separated Bangalore from Mysore in 1809 because of its strategic cantonment area, and ruled it directly until the nation's independence in 1947.

Bangalore was a prime area for nationalist activity during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The printing press was instrumental in the rise of nationalism in the city. By 1900, there were 20 printing presses in Bangalore, bringing out newspapers in English, Kannada, and Urdu. The Evening Mail (1869), Bangalore Spectator (1869), Nadegannadi (1899), Deshabhimani (1874) and Bangalore Examiner (1873) were some of these papers.

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[46] The original capital of Karnataka state.

Organizations such as the Indian Progressive Union (1904), Mahila Seva Samaja (1913), and the Arya Samaj (1894) were started to bring about social and religious reforms. The activities of these organizations were closely monitored by the British for their potential threat to British hegemony.

The Swadeshi (independence) movement begun in 1906 in northern India was implemented by the theosophists in Bangalore through the sale of indigenous goods and through the organization of nationalist educational institutions such as National High School and Central College in the city. In the early 1920s, the Khilafat Committee was started in Bangalore Cantonment and soon after joined the National Congress Party.

Ironically, despite various nationalistic publications and activities, it was the plague that accelerated feelings of nationalism in the city. The plague of 1898 resulted in regulations on public gatherings and on impositions of segregation among family members. The measures taken to disinfect and inoculate people and keep them apart during religious gatherings made them distrustful and hostile to the British officials.

British rule in the city thus diminished considerably after the plague, and anti-British sentiment was supported by various nationalist newspapers. Besides, repeated visits of Mahatma Gandhi to the city, trade union riots in the cloth mills, and the alliance between the Khilafat Committee and the National Congress Party contributed to the mobilization of protests against British administration in the city.

Historical records, as documented by the Karnataka Gazette (1990), show that youth from various parts of the city joined the boycott of British manufactured salt in the symbolic Dandi March in 1930, and participated in the Civil Disobedience Movements in

1930 and 1932. A regular Congress Committee was established in the Cantonment area in 1934, which carried out Gandhi's initiatives against untouchability and the caste system in the city. By the Quit India Movement in the early 1940s, the Congress Party had gained popularity in the city and elsewhere in the nation. By 1947, when independence was won, the Congress had obtained 125 seats in the national legislative assembly and came into power as the first ruling party in independent India.

Contrary to the ideological unified picture of the independence struggle projected by national elites, the independence movement was marked by communal violence between Hindus and Muslims all over the country. For example, the famous Ganapati Disturbance in the city in the 1930s was prompted by the removal of the Ganapati (the son of the Hindu God Shiva) idol by the Bangalore Municipal Muslim President, Abbas Khan. Khan was led to believe that a Hindu temple was being built on government school grounds because the idol which was housed in a small shed on the school's premises, was drawing devotion from Hindu school boys. This led to widespread riots in Bangalore leading to the strengthening of the predominantly Hindu Congress Party in the city which was successful in quelling the riots. Although today Bangalore has a diverse and heterogenous population, the struggle for signification among religious minorities such as Christians and Muslims is overshadowed by the predominantly Hindu political presence.

Migration to the city peaked after independence when various industries were established in Bangalore. Although no recent figures on the composition of the migrant population are available, 1981 census figures state that 20.5 percent came from villages

outlying the city, 40 percent from other states (primarily from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan), 0.5 percent from other Asian countries, and 0.2 percent from non-Asian countries (Karnataka Gazette, 1990).

Increased migration to the city is considered a characteristic of economic globalization where the global city becomes a space for economic opportunity (Sassen 1996; Kamdar 1996). Residents in rural areas immigrate to the city in search of jobs in particular, and a better lifestyle in general. The city also provides a context for the expression of nationalist ideologies because the migrant becomes the Other against whom the natives of the state need to protect their identity. As Kamdar (1996) describes, the strategy of Bal Thackeray, the leader of the Shiv Sena in Bombay, is to channel the disillusionment and frustrations of the city's natives (at having to compete for jobs with foreigners in the city) into protest and antagonism against such outsiders as South Indians, Parsis, and Gujaratis, to name a few, who occupy the white-collar and industrial jobs in the city. Changing "Bombay" to "Mumbai' was a symbolic move to repossess the city, to anchor it to native ownership, and to identify those who were uncomfortable with this name, as foreigners and oppressors.

Bangalore is not far behind in the frustrations of its people toward foreigners in the city. The Chief Minister of Karnataka, J.H. Patel stated in a speech in the city in mid-1997 that Bangalore no longer belonged to Kannadigas, but was being invaded by Sindhis, Tamilians, Andhraites, and capitalists from North India. At this time the Sunday Times of India conducted a poll on 221 Kannadigas and 141 non-Kannadigas to show that 68 percent felt the city's natives were being sidelined in various job opportunities

from other states ("Is Bangalore being invaded?" 1997). The establishment of multinational corporations in the city is welcomed because of the jobs they make available to the people. The partnership between global and local is therefore seen, at present, as beneficial to the community.

Another 1997 survey conducted by The Indian Market Research Bureau (IMRB) and The Times of India on 2, 654 people in nine Indian cities[47] summarized that the people in Bangalore are cosmopolitan, liberal, and interested in technology. They are cynical toward political processes and favor the establishment of MNCs in the city and in the country. More than half the respondents in all cities welcomed the entry of MNCs and felt that Indian products are as good or even better than foreign ones, and that the introduction of foreign goods has brought in a much needed competitiveness in the Indian marketplace ("The new Indian dream," 1997).

Strategic Partnerships between the Global and Local

During the summer months when fieldwork for this project was conducted, India's 50th anniversary provided various spaces in Bangalore for the confrontation of traditionalism with modernity, of local with global,[48] and for the avowal of the

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[47] The survey was conducted to mark the country's 50th year of independence. It used random route sampling method and was conducted in Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Calcutta, Bangalore, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Patna, and Hyderabad. Respondents for the survey were people born around independence, that is, between 1945 and 1950 (midnight's children), and people born between 1972 and 1981 (midnight's grandchildren).

[48] I am aware that traditionalism, modernity, local, and global are loaded terms and have been contested in their usage to characterize a stage in a nation's development -- a usage that denies the dynamism of a nation's culture, or the unevenness and complexity of its development. I use the terms here as mere points of departure to set the stage for a discussion of how audiences in Bangalore grapple with the various fusions of traditional

intransmutability of the Indian nation-state. Advertisements on billboards, in magazines, on television, and on restaurant and shop signs carried the logo of the Indian national flag beside their own logos to assert their allegiance to the nation and their pride in the nation's journey to this milestone. For example, the saffron, white, and green of the Indian national flag were placed beside the red, white, and blue of the Pepsi logo, and MacIntosh computer's multicolored apple bore the legend, "The Colors of Freedom." The ring of confidence around a tube of Colgate toothpaste now encircled the colors of the national flag, and Cadbury's Dairy Milk chocolate had its models posing in flag-face. On television, the logos of MTV and Channel [V] contained the colors of the Indian national flag.

Pride in the nation provided a context for the expression of pride in the city as well. Coca Cola's slogan, "Always the real thing, Always Coca Cola" now read "Always Lal Bagh, Always Coca Cola," or "Always Residency Road, Always Coca Cola," equating the 'real thing' with the real geographical space of landmarks in Bangalore: Lalbagh which is the city's botanical garden, and Residency Road, the city's upscale shopping and residential area.

By making claims on a city, Sassen (1996) writes, these:

> new city users...have reconstituted strategic spaces of the city in their image: their claim is rarely examined or challenged. They contribute to changing the social morphology of the city and to constituting ... the city of late modernism. The new city of users is a fragile one, whose survival and successes are centered on an economy of high productivity, advanced technologies, and intensified exchanges (p. 219).

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and modern, of global and local, and so on.

The juxtaposition of national and local with global brand names is at one level an obvious marketing strategy where the global implies it understands the local consumer's character, pride, and need for independence, yet offers the consumer a foothold in the global community. At another level, it is an ingenious strategy to quell fears of cultural imperialism where the global brands affirm the permanence of the local and simulate an acknowledgment of their superiority in accommodating the colors of Indian nationalism within the space that expresses its own identity.

The locality of the city provides an important context for the examination of global processes in national spaces because it "allows us to specify a geography of strategic places at the global scale, places bound to each other by the dynamics of economic globalization" (Sassen 1996, p. 206).

Bangalore is bound to various global centers through the location of regional offices of multinational corporations such as Hewlett Packard, Motorola, 3M, and Texas Instruments. Right after the nation's independence in 1947, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru established major public sector companies such as Bharat Electronics Limited (which manufacture television sets among other electronic goods) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited within the city (Mendonca, 1997). The city now has textile, flour, steel, porcelain, oil, tanning, handloom, wood, and aeronautic industries. The availability of electric supply for electric consumption led to the establishment of various automobile industries, machine tool and electronic factories, and agro-based industries, many of which are collaborations with foreign industrialists. Gandhi's khadi (hand-spun cloth) initiative in 1927 to encourage self-reliance particularly among women, spawned various

village industries such as pottery, leather, carpentry, and sericulture. Bangalore is now chief exporter of machinery, electronic equipment, leather, aircrafts, produce, silk and cotton, and building materials to different parts of the country. The thriving industrial environment has led to the success of adjunct businesses -- tourism, hotels, restaurants, and parks and recreation (Karnataka Gazette, 1990).

The location of multinational corporations in Bangalore is regarded by various software leaders as a strategic first step to establishing a presence in the Asia region. Texas Instruments (TI) began its software programming facility in the city in 1986. Aikat and Singhal (1993) summarize six reasons for the establishment of TI and other MNCs in Bangalore: high standard of science and engineering education in the country, high availability of educated workers because Bangalore has a high number of colleges and universities, widespread knowledge and use of the English language, low cost of labor, and positive attitude of the Indian government toward private foreign investment.

Although the presence of MNCs in the city is considered a solution to brain drain, this is an illusory panacea because the technical expertise of the engineers (paid around USD 400-600 a month) flows into foreign and not Indian technology. Also, many firms are foreign only in name and organization. The personnel are all Indian. The training of local personnel for global companies limits problems of labor relocation and immigration. Most important, the 12-hour difference between India and the United States, for example, means that these corporations can have a labor force around the clock, 24 hours a day (Aikat and Singhal, 1993).

The city is now home to several software companies including Wipro Infotec

Group, TATA, IBM, Digital and Microland (The macrosoft industry, 1997). The TATA Group, based on an agreement between the governments of Singapore and India, has established an Information Technology Park in Whitefield on the outskirts of Bangalore (Hande, 1997).

The Local Dumping Ground

Bangalore has often been cited as 'the place to be' because of its beautiful climate, cosmopolitan population, and sophisticated business environment. It has been called a Pensioner's Paradise and the Silicon Valley of India. However, it has moved from being dubbed the Garden City to the Garbage City due to overcrowding and pollution (Kashi, 1997).

The increase in business offices within the city caused real estate prices to peak in mid-1995, but crash in mid-1997, falling almost 40 percent. The crash was due to unprecedented business constructions during the 1995 peak followed by a lack of demand for those office spaces because of the frequent power-cuts, water shortage, and poor roads within the city. Local managers of MNCs and indigenous corporations now opt for less polluted office environments on the outskirts of Bangalore (Rai et al., 1997).

Real-estate prices in the city are now on the rise again and apartment complexes equipped with telephone exchanges, water recycling plants, electricity generators, and mini supermarkets have cropped up all over the city, insulating them from the civic problems of the rest of Bangalore (Mendonca, 1997).

While newer and better equipped apartment complexes emerge in various parts of the city shooting up from the slum dwellings that crowd their bases, the city's roads,

electric supply, and garbage removal systems have seen rapid and unchecked degeneration. In a report to The Times of India newspaper, Bangalore City Corporation (BCC) Commissioner, A. Ravindra said that decentralization of power is the problem. With no one authority in charge, and numerous area boards and village panchayats[49] haggling over which issue should receive priority and funds, the various problems of the city remain neglected. While the BCC has jurisdiction over roads, water supply, and other civic matters, the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has control over zoning regulations. Ravindra implemented the Clean Bangalore Campaign where fines are imposed for littering and spitting on pavements and roads. However, the criticism is that these measures are enforced only in the more sophisticated parts of the city such as the main Mahatma Gandhi Road, and the adjacent Brigade Road, while the rest of the city groans under piles of garbage and badly damaged roads. Huge amounts of paper work, nominal fees, high property taxes for buildings, and lack of infrastructure for recycling and handling of garbage hinders the development of the city (Kashi, 1997).

The city therefore is a site for simultaneous increase in business corporations and slums, in multinational collaborations and in number of workers migrating to the city, in higher standards of living, and in higher crime rates in and around the city.

Sassen (1996) writes, "Global cities are the sites for the over valorization of corporate capital and the further devalorization of disadvantaged economic actors, both firms and workers. The leading sectors of corporate capital are now global in their organization and operations. And many of the disadvantaged workers in global cities are

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[49] Rural government.

women, immigrants, and people of color, whose political sense of self and identities are not necessarily embedded in the 'nation' or the 'national community.' Both find in the global city a strategic site for their economic and political operations" (p. 206-207).

Sassen's comments raise important questions for this study: in this denationalizing of the urban space, if the disadvantaged do not necessarily regard their identities as embedded in the nation or national community, then what communities do they feel they belong to? How is this community constructed and sustained? Is 'embeddedness' within the national community a privilege of the advantaged?

Guha (1994) writes that the peasant in colonial India was grappling with the immediate realities of his existence: hunger, poverty, and landlord oppression. Drawing from Guha's analysis, we can say that the disadvantaged in the global city face the realities of crime, unemployment, hunger, and poverty and draw a sense of community from the very local rather than the national or global.

As we shall see in Chapter 7, television played an important role in providing a sense of locality and local community for families from lower socio-economic classes. Sassen (1996) says that cities earlier integrated into the economics of the region became, in the age of global economy, disconnected from their region and nation. She rightly notes that the denationalization of nation space and the emergence of globalization within the nation has been given positive value by government and economic elites. However, the sense of powerlessness and futility that it brings to the people heightens their sense of local and global identity.

She says, "we may see a growing significance of sub- and supranational political

categories and actors....Today's global cities are in part the spaces of postcolonialism and indeed contain conditions for the formation of a postcolonialist discourse" (p. 216-217). The global city therefore becomes a microexample of the macro processes of globalization and its characteristics of internal differentiation, identity contestations, and disenfranchisement. Gillespie (1995) writes that identity, of which ethnicity is a part, is a production, never complete, always in a process and always constituted within and not outside representation. Media and cultural consumption, therefore, play an important role in constructing, defining, contesting and reconstructing national, ethnic and other cultural identities.

The need for community among the disenfranchised achieves renewed urgency in the global city. Fieldwork at television offices and in audiences' homes showed that communities were constructed at the very local level for those who felt most disenfranchised by the global processes in the city, but at the national and even global level by those empowered by the denationalizing of the city space.

## Method

Bangalore has been described as an industrial, technologically sophisticated, and culturally diverse city. However, the whole city cannot be essentialized into those characteristics because some parts of the city are more conservative and some more liberal than others. Audience analysis for this study was primarily conducted in C.V. Ramanagar, located in the eastern part of Bangalore city (Appendix F). C.V. Ramanagar encompasses the affluent Rahat Bagh, leads into the Nagvarpalya village, and houses middle and upper middle class families in the Trinity Enclave apartment complex, and in

Vishwa Vihar, the air-force officer's enclave. C.V. Ramanagar lies between the Old Madras Road highway and the Airport Road, and is adjacent to the Indiranagar neighborhood.

From my interviews with cable operators in the city, I learned that Indiranagar and C.V. Ramanagar were considered prototypes of the city itself, with its diverse population of North Indians, Kannadigas, Malayalees, and Tamilians, and its slums, business complexes, and high rise apartments. Several office complexes and apartment buildings have spilled into C.V. Ramanagar from Indiranagar because of the Rehmatullah-location of businesses to the outskirts of the city to avoid the civic problems and pollution within it. C.V. Ramanagar now in turn, spills into Nagvarpalya (a predominantly middle and lower socioeconomic class neighborhood), reconfiguring its marketplace and local temple into a shopping complex (including a one-room gymnasium for men and women), and a bus-stop.

As a native of Bangalore, I spent the first 23 years of my life growing up in the city. I am familiar with C.V. Ramanagar, Nagvarpalya and Indiranagar, having spent about 17 years growing up in Jeevanbheema Nagar, an adjoining neighborhood, which is walking distance from all the above three neighborhoods.

Like many urban youth, my sisters and I grew up equally comfortable with Indian traditions at home and at family weddings and festivities, as we were with partaking of a global community of western music, styles of dressing, and tastes in food. I played with children from the neighborhood and shared meals with the neighbors. Yet, in my adolescent years, I became very conscious that we were minorities in our predominantly

Hindu neighborhood. Both my parents are fifth-generation Kannada Christians, and we stood out in the neighborhood with our Christian and western music, our short hair-cuts, our use of the English language, and our Sunday evening trudge through the street to mass at the local Catholic church.

STAR TV made its appearance on Indian television in 1991. We didn't have cable, and my neighbor invited me several times to watch television at her house with all the other neighbors who didn't have a cable connection. However, I preferred to watch MTV and STAR TV by tweaking the antenna for a grainy picture on our television set, and enjoy my view of the world in privacy. I left India for graduate studies in the United States knowing that television in Bangalore was radically different in the 1990s than it was in the 1980s when we just had the national network, Doordarshan.

Distance between researcher and researched is often a crucial factor in determining the researcher's understanding of and interest in the researched (Spivak 1994; Epstein 1996). While in the United States, comments from friends and relatives about television in Bangalore caused me to think deeply about television reception in the city. Many asked me to tell them what was happening on "Santa Barbara" or "Bold and the Beautiful" so they would know what would happen in the future of the characters they were now watching on STAR TV. They knew they were a part of a transnational community, and understood their place in the time-lag hierarchy. I also began to hear about the children of house-maids and construction-laborers not going to work because

they wanted to stay at home and watch local films on cable television.[50] It was obvious that audiences at different levels had varying interpretations of the television experience. This prompted me to question the impact of private television on the efforts of the national government to sustain a national identity through Doordarshan, and on the reconfiguration of audiences' global, national, and local identities.

Preliminary research for this dissertation began in December 1995 when I visited Bangalore and collected literature on the privatization of the telecommunication industry in the country. I visited newspaper archives and various bookstores in Bangalore to obtain information on government policies on economic liberalization and the ramifications of this policy on the regulation and organization of private television networks and on programming content. A second phase of research was done in the summer of 1996 when I conducted extensive textual analysis of programs from the global (STAR TV and ZEE TV), national (Doordarshan 1 and Doordarshan 2) and private regional (Sun TV, Udaya TV, and Asianet) networks to explore their differences and similarities, and the techniques of production used to establish a station identity and define a viewing community.

Policy and program analyses (McMillin 1996; McMillin 1997a; McMillin 1997b; McMillin 1997c) brought me up to date on the historical, political, and cultural context of the television environment in India, helped me develop a research design, and stimulated questions for television network and audience analysis, which I undertake in this study.

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50 Cable connection is not very expensive, and several houses in even slum dwellings may be connected to a community cable service provider.

## How the Study was Conducted

Research for this study was conducted during three months in the summer of 1997, through the four basic components of fieldwork: listening, observing, interviewing and participating. The method therefore was primarily fieldwork conducted through an ethnographic approach.

Power is a particularly provocative concept in ethnographic research because it is embedded in various relations -- between the researcher and the society he or she is researching, within the society itself, between the researcher and his or her data and so on. Thus power becomes an important issue because it is tied to the access the researcher has to the data.

Commentaries on ethnographic methodology indicate that the native ethnographer has a greater advantage over the non-native ethnographer in his or her ability to pick up on cultural and linguistic nuances. However, Paredes (1993) says the important issue is the ethnographic methodology and not the ethnicity of the ethnographer. The ethnographer however, has to understand first that the community under study is not a homogenous entity and second, the ethnographer has to be aware of his or her own subject-position.

Lal (1996) says that when the Third World researcher goes back to her own country to research her own society, the nativity of the researcher and her position of power over the researched is problematized. The challenge is to come back to the First World and write about one's experience taking care not to reproduce colonizing discourses. As Lal did, I occupy a shifting and complex position of Indian female,

returning native, western-educated researcher, and feminist scholar. I approached my fieldwork with the understanding that the people I interviewed occupied various positions based on their identities as informants and on their differences in class, caste, and gender; and that I myself, occupied shifting locations based on my relationship with them.

## Research on Television Networks

Finnegan (1992) writes that background preparation for fieldwork takes three major forms: theoretical, where the researcher has to be familiar with contending viewpoints regarding the issues to be studied; ethnographic, where the researcher has to examine the specific historical and cultural context of the area by studying unpublished archived documents, published examples, audio and video recordings, school textbooks and syllabi, manuscripts of other researchers and so on; and, linguistic, where the researcher has to have a certain degree of linguistic competence to maximize competency in the field. As mentioned earlier, policy and textual analyses provided me a theoretical background to the cable and television environment in India. To bring myself up to date on the historical and cultural context of the area, I spent the first few weeks on my stay in Bangalore researching documents in local libraries and newspaper archives, and reading class projects on cable and television conducted by the first-, second-, and third-year degree students at Mount Carmel College, Bangalore.

I visited college professors and discussed their perspectives on the television environment in the city and country, and read several current and back issues of newspapers and magazines for stories on cable initiatives in the city, and on the status of the much debated Broadcast Bill. My discussions with college professors and later,

people from cable and television offices, provided me with information on the present television structure in India. My task was to put together various pieces of this puzzle because there is no documented account of the current television environment in the country. Indian mass communication textbooks detail the history of national television, but a comprehensive report on the nature of the industry after economic liberalization in 1991 is not available, probably because the field is changing so rapidly, and the government has yet to lay down regulations that define it. For linguistic competence, I did not need much preparation since Kannada is my native language and I can speak the language fluently.

Before I arrived in the city, I had set up interviews with directors and audience research officers at the Bangalore Doordarshan and All India Radio through my contacts with college professors and friends in the media. Through extensive networking with the sources themselves, I was able to interview managers and sales executives of the regional offices of STAR TV and ZEE TV. Some interviews, as with the vice president and general manager of Udaya TV, were conducted without intermediary contacts. I was granted interviews by going directly to their offices and asking to talk with them.

I was aware that I would have to negotiate through various power structures at the TV stations and offices. I was prepared with a short statement of purpose and a letter from a professor stating I was a student conducting research. I was prepared to answer questions about myself and my research, and took along a note pad and pen in case the respondent objected to my use of a tape recorder. At the beginning of each interview, I stated my research purpose and institutional affiliation. I mentioned that I had a

statement of purpose if the interviewee wanted to know my research purpose in greater detail. In most cases the interviewees were content with my brief verbal description.

My questions were fairly consistent: I was interested in each interviewee's job description, the nature of his or her organization (I sometimes asked several people from the same organization to describe its structure, for triangulation), and his or her perspective of the television environment in India, and of the audience in Bangalore (See Appendix A for questions that guided interviews at television offices). In many cases, the comments of the respondent led to further questions on job details and personal frustrations or fulfillments with it.

For all interviews, I asked permission to use the tape recorder. In instances where the interviewee felt uncomfortable with the tape recorder, I respectfully agreed not to use it. Instead, I asked for permission to take notes to which these respondents consented.

The climate of privatization, competition, and consumer-orientation seemed to work in my favor. All the interviews -- whether at the Bangalore Doordarshan, Udaya TV, STAR TV, ZEE TV, or cable operator offices, were granted with courtesy. In many instances, I was served coffee and was given brochures, mission statements, and literature on the history and function of the respective network.

I noticed that my interaction with respondents varied with their age and gender. Paredes (1993) writes that the ethnographic encounter offers a site for the manipulation of power by the researcher on the researched and vice versa. Lal (1996) notes that power structures within the society also intersect with access the researcher receives to nonparticipatory ethnographic materials such as documents, journals and so on. When

the ethnographer goes to research a society that is sexist and hierarchical, then the researcher's interaction with that society becomes sexist and hierarchical. This is because the people in power one is researching use the research situation either to "impress the foreign-returned scholar and hence reclaim an inverted gender hierarchy created by the research dyad, or as a means to innocently illustrate responses to queries ... (and) act to undermine and subvert a researcher's goal of non hierarchical and non objectifying relationships" (p. 196)."

My power as a foreign-returned student was subverted at the Bangalore Doordarshan, Udaya TV, All India Radio, and UBN Cable Network offices where the middle-aged gentlemen whom I interviewed treated me as a little girl with a research paper to write. They were solicitous and benevolent and discussed at length their perspectives on the influence of privatized television on a "unified" Indian culture.

Respondents in their 20s and early 30s (closer to my age) at the ZEE TV and STAR TV offices and in various cable head-ends, treated me as if I were a colleague. They shared their daily frustrations about job and home with me, and asked me if I had similar frustrations in balancing home and work. They identified with me in their own struggles to make a space for themselves in a teeming and competitive world.

After each interview, I would play back the tape and review my notes at home, taking care to see that I could listen to and interpret the interviewees comments as clearly as I possibly could. In cases of unclear reception (for example, a part of one interview was conducted during a power-cut with a noisy generator in action just outside the office), I listened to the tape as carefully as I could, and then called the interviewee back

with questions on comments that I could not hear too well.

Research on Audience Reception

Thompson (1990) writes that the media pervade all aspects of social culture in modern societies and create and sustain circulation of symbolic forms in specific socio-historical contexts. Thompson notes that television allows interaction across time and space, influences the way people act for others, respond to others and interact in the process of receiving messages. Mass communication has created new boundaries between private and public life and thus creates "mediated private events and mediated public events" (p. 241) and therefore, "the private domain of modern societies - in particular, the private domestic setting - has become the principle site of mediated publicness" (p. 243).

As mentioned in the introduction, the CCCS school contributed much to the study of television audiences in the domestic environment. From ideological and textual analyses, these studies have shifted focus to question class and gender hierarchies within families, the use of other communication technologies within the household, and the construction of national identity in transnational media (Morley 1992; Drotner 1993).

Drotner (1993) writes that "the term ethnography is commonly applied to denote an extension of reception studies in two directions: in empirical terms, the context of investigation is widened to include areas beyond the immediate situation of reception. In methodological terms, participant observation and informal talks are applied in order to complement in-depth interviews that form the basis of reception studies" (p. 2).

Gillespie (1993) writes that media ethnography is "the empirical description and

analysis of cultures based on intensive and extensive fieldwork in a selected setting... (It) highlights the small-scale processes, rather than the large-scale products, of people's perceptions, thoughts and action. The ethnographer reads the world, as she reads mediated messages, through the eyes of her informants themselves" (p. 1). Also, ethnography allows the researcher to make connections between the private and the public, the domestic, local, national and global, and finally, between micro issues of power and macro structures of power in society.

Interviews with families in their own viewing environments in this study is an attempt to advance theory on reception, national identity, and globalization. I located the nine families in this study (three each from upper, middle, and lower socioeconomic classes, respectively, and three each from Hindu, Muslim, and Christian religions, respectively)[51] primarily through my sister, Arathi Singh. I discussed the purpose of my visit with several family members and friends. Arathi, with whom I was staying, introduced me to three maids from low income families: Padma, also known as Mary

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I use classifications of religion and socioeconomic class (the latter is based on monthly income of the family as a whole) as a starting point for discussion. As we shall see in Chapter 7, these distinctions are arbitrary and some respondents resisted such nomenclature. For all interviews, I strove as much as possible for polyvocality and self-naming. As Zavella (1996) and Wolf (1996) suggest, I asked my respondents whether at the television stations or at home, to name their positions and identities as partakers of global, local, and national television. Zavella writes that self-naming will lead to insight on how connotations based on class, race and ethnicity define the informant's sense of self. I am aware that giving "voice" to the subjects may result in a picture of how they want to be represented rather than how they really are (Lal, 1996). However, as Briggs notes, reflexivity of research results will help determine how audience's observations of themselves may be interpreted. The categories are mentioned here only to lead to a discussion later where they are contested.

(Christian), Saraswati (Hindu), and Kareema (Muslim) worked in the homes of her friends. I discussed my project with these women, and when they agreed to let me watch television with them, I visited their families, and set up a convenient schedule by which I could spend time with all of them as they watched television or went about their daily activities.

I met Shanti's (Christian) family through Arathi, and Azeezunissa's (Muslim) and Janaki's (Hindu) families through a relative. Of these middle income families, Shanti's family lived in Vishwa Vihar and Janaki and Azeezunissa's families lived in Basavanagudi, a somewhat conservative neighborhood in Bangalore southwest.

Arathi also introduced me to Sumedha's (Hindu) and Ruksana's (Muslim) families with whom she was acquainted. I met Susan's (Christian) family when they saw me waiting for an autorickshaw[52] in front of Vishwa Vihar and gave me a ride to Indiranagar. All these three high income families live in the Rahat Bagh Enclave.

Thus, apart from the Anjum and Chandrashekaraiah families, all the other families lived relatively close to one another in the C.V. Ramanagar area and I was able to visit one family after another without wasting much time commuting between them. The proximity of most of the families was also a necessity more than an advantage because the type of cable channels reaching these families hinged on the fact that they were all served by the same cable operator. The cable operators I spoke to said they all included the main Doordarshan channels, STAR TV, ZEE TV, and the prominent regional channels such as SUN TV and Udaya TV. However, the inclusion of special channels

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[52] A three-wheeled taxi.

such as ESPN and Discovery depended on the demands of the clientele served by each operator. Hence channel menus varied from locality to locality across the city. By focusing on families in and around C.V. Ramanagar, I could converse with them on shows they commonly watched -- shows that I could watch on my television as well, since I lived in the same area.

Participant observation showed me that the families did not watch the same programs. Thus, I could not elicit responses to any one text, as has been done by various reception analysts (Morley 1992; Gillespie 1993; Derne 1995; Rajagopal 1996). I had to allow the respondents to discuss why they watched the shows they did (which I watched with them), and what they got out of them.

Azeezunissa's family had a similar channel menu as those in C.V. Ramanagar. Janaki's family on the other hand, did not have a cable connection at all. The children sometimes tried to receive the signal by adjusting their antenna. I decided to interview Janaki's family as part of this study because they provided a perspective that was different from the other families. They claimed their lack of cable access was the reason for the difference.

Williams (1996) underscores the importance of knowing a community in varied ways and says researchers need to do their homework before they enter the field. In so doing, they "must continually try to figure out the power implications of who they are (or better put, how they are being construed and by whom) in relation to what they are doing, asking and observing" (p. 73). Most important, the researcher and the subjects and their constructions of each other exist within practices of signification and within the overall

field of power relations. The researcher is skinfolk but not kinfolk, and thus is allowed, in this neither-here-nor-there category, to construct a social persona that is not authoritative (as colonizer), but that is benign and well-meaning.

Zavella (1996) writes that the insider ethnographer is constantly negotiating her status since the members of the community being studied often make assumptions of the researchers' intents, skills, and personal characteristics, and thus, the insider researcher has the unique limitation of always having to be accountable to the community studied. Zavella notes that the researcher has to decenter his or her own narrative to avoid investing himself or herself with too much power over the subject.

My first visit with each family provided them an opportunity to assess my intentions and my personal characteristics. The respondents asked me several questions about my background and marital status. They asked me about family life, education, job opportunities, and crime rates in the United States.

I spent approximately a week with each family (around 25 hours), visiting them during their peak and non-peak television watching times. During my visits, I would sit in a corner of the room where the television was placed (usually the living room) and observe interactions between family members while the television set was on or off. As I shall discuss in Chapter 5, experiences with each family differed, with some families feeling they had to entertain me initially, and others ignoring me from the very beginning. Also, my position in the room varied. For example, in Padma and Kareema's homes, I was made to sit on a chair while the others sat on the floor, while in Sumedha's and Susan's homes, I sat on a sofa with the rest of the family.

In all families, I noticed that I was welcomed at a certain level in the power-matrix within the household. For example, in Padma's home, her husband Ganesan attempted to take over the conversation several times during the family interview. Padma's forthrightness kept him from monopolizing the discussion. Their comments were at times contradictory with Ganesan trying to construct a certain image of the family and Padma contesting it.

As the researcher strives to move from outsider to insider to obtain pertinent data, Briggs (1986) writes that first the researcher should understand the metacommunicative context of the community and achieve communicative competence in order to effectively obtain data. Briggs writes that rather than impose referential frames on the researched, the researcher has to be aware of the "key" or "tone, manner, or spirit in which an act is done" (Hymes as cited in Briggs, p. 46) because "the same words, possessing the same semantic content, may be spoken for an entirely different effect, such as humor, sarcasm or equivocation" (p. 46). Briggs also comments that the researcher has to be sensitive to different genres such as jokes, serious speech, literary and religious allusions, oral history, political rhetoric, and so on, that are particular to the cultural context of the researched in order to interpret the data as close to the reality of the communicative event as possible.

Thus, during participant observation sessions, I listened keenly and took notes on the various phrases, slang, and colloquialisms used by the respondents in their interactions with one another. I paid particular attention to any words or expressions that were borrowed from the television programs they watched. Throughout my interviews with families, I also watched television extensively in my sister's house, and conversed

with various friends and relatives to familiarize myself with the communicative context I was a part of.

In general, all families got used to my being around by my third visit, and went about their activities without acknowledging me for the most part. At the end of the week of observation, I interviewed each family as a whole. As Morley (1992) writes, the method of research and interviewing should come as close to the conditions under which individual members discuss and form opinions. He cites Pollock (1955) to say that "we should not think of every individual as a monad whose opinions crystallize in isolation, or as being in a social vacuum" (p. 17). The family interactions during the interviews seemed an extension of their interaction while watching television and only rarely did I have to prompt a certain member to expand on a comment or prod out of silence.

I used my tape recorder to record all interviews after the consent of the family members. After all interviews were recorded, I was faced with the task of transcribing tapes, deciphering notes, and writing up my research.

Van Maanen (1988) writes that the style in which the researcher chooses to write, that is, realist, confessional or impressionist, conveys the distance and power the researcher has or feels over the subject. He details three types of ethnographic writing. The realist tale is dispassionate and authoritative. It may manifest experiential authority where the author hides behind the "authenticity" or neutrality of the text; typical forms where the author focuses on mundane details of everyday life; and native's point of view where the author provides a bit of interpretation between quotes from the native. The confessional tale exists as personalized authority where the reader shares a certain

intimacy with the audiences and tries to convince them of his or her human qualities; field worker's point of view where the author flits between an insider's passionate perspective and an outsider's dispassionate one; and naturalness, where the author tries to convey the impression that the work is uncontaminated and that he or she was part of the society reported on. Finally, the impressionist tale is figurative and highly personalized. It exists as textual identity which is a somewhat chronological rolling narrative; as fragmented knowledge where cultural knowledge is imparted to the audience in a disjointed way; characterization where the author's individuality shines through; and dramatic control where the author maintains control to build up tension in the text.

Of all these three, the confessional tale is least authoritative while the realist tale is the most authoritative. I move through all three forms in this dissertation. I have represented, wherever possible, the actual comments of the respondents so as to allow for polyvocality, and also, as Mankekar (1993) states in her ethnography, to open up these comments and my analysis of them for further interpretation.

Lal (1996) writes that there are two major trends in women's studies: one where the researcher makes the obligatory announcement of her position but does not actually confront and integrate this positioning into the analysis; and the second, where the researcher positions herself against the race-class-sex-sexuality matrix, but only as a politically disengaged response, and does not discuss how this positioning is implicated in the analysis. By positioning such privileged epistemological standpoints, Lal notes that the researcher stands in danger of obscuring the possibility that her representations of the subjects under study may be colonialist. This is particularly relevant to my position as

"native insider' where, by positioning myself as a feminist postcolonial scholar entering the Indian middle class urban society into which I was born, I also stand in danger of essentializing the television audiences I have studied. Lal says the construction of subjectivist, nativity and insiderness as opposed to objectivity, foreignness and outsiderness, although an attempt to counter western universalism, may reinforce borderlines between Us and Them, and between Self and Other.

These binaries are based on and are exacerbated by the very methodology of social science research where the researcher with his or her academic credentials, intellect, research questions and goal of writing up the study for publication, stands apart and above the researched. The solution then is to be aware of multiple locations of the researcher and the researched, and the possibility of hybrid identities between the two. Again, hybridity as the new site of epistemic privilege must be resisted, says Lal. Instead, the postcolonial intellectual must use her dislocation as a starting point for methodology to get out of the dualisms of native/non-native, insider/outsider and so on, and instead question the hyphen between the two.

I see the hyphen between native and non-native as a point of continuity and not separation or dichotomy. My status as returning native does not alienate me from the context of my upbringing, but allows me to Rehmatullah-enter, at a different time and place in it. Ultimately there has to be an acceptance at the beginning of any ethnography that the researcher can only provide a close picture of the field rather than a complete reality of it. The issue is more how the researcher negotiates the power structures that serve as barriers to the researched and how best the researcher represents the researched

through data that is obtained through the ethnographic encounter.

To summarize, Bangalore offers a site for the interrogation of definitions of network and audience identity between broadcasters and audiences. As a technologically sophisticated city, Bangalore offers a lucrative location for MNCs, and provides opportunities for the economic advancement of its residents. Private television channels, with their narratives of progress, echo the globalization processes within the city while the national network Doordarshan stifles it with its narratives of development. This chapter therefore sets the stage for the analysis of the impact of differing definitions of network and audience identity in the television stations on audiences themselves. To examine the correspondence between production and consumption of these definitions, I first evaluate network and audience identity as articulated by respondents at the television stations before discussing audience responses in Chapter 7.

# CHAPTER V

# GLOBAL, NATIONAL, AND LOCAL IDENTITY ON TELEVISION IN INDIA

The political economy approach offers a framework for the analysis of the relationship between culture and power in contemporary societies. This approach regards the media industries as the site for the intersection of culture and power such that "culture" as it is defined by those in power, is disseminated to members of society. Political economy in anthropology, as Ortner (1984) writes, emerged as a reaction to the focus on culture and on societies as islands in themselves. Political economy analyses made connections between change in small-scale societies as studied by anthropologists to large-scale historical developments (such as colonialism and capitalist expansion) that were external to the societies in question.

Several scholars of international communication and national identity such as A. Mattelart and M. Mattelart (1986), Huntington (1996), Schiller (1994), and Price (1995) regard media institutions as tools of elites in power who mobilize a certain concept of culture to suit their capitalistic and hegemonic intentions. I agree with Morley and Robins (1995) and Hall (1986) who adopt an anti media-deterministic stance and posit that a correspondence in cultural symbols exists between the production and consumption of television messages.

In this chapter, I discuss definitions of nation, network, and audience identity as expressed by respondents at the transnational, national, and regional networks in Bangalore. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first contains a discussion of network identity while the second contains an analysis of audience identity as expressed by the employees of these networks.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the terms transnational, national, and local pertain not so much to the reach of the networks, but the identity each network strives for itself. This is because Doordarshan, like Star TV and Zee TV, may be received in various countries in Asia, and Udaya TV can be received across the country.

Shields and Muppidi (1996) write that the availability of alternate programming from private cable and satellite channels in addition to that of Doordarshan may undermine the exclusionary national integration project undertaken by Doordarshan according to the whims of particular political parties in power. They note:

> The new programming environment aids in this process (of integration) by satisfying the middle class demand for increased program choice. Because of its competitive nature, the environment also appears more sensitive to their tastes....Further, the various regional language satellite services such as Sun TV are beginning to meet the hitherto neglected demand of various language groups to have entertainment and other fare in their own vernacular. Yet, this same dynamic may also operate to undermine television as an apparatus of state control. In the old environment, the government had more or less total control over what was televised in the national space....In India's new 'audiovisual space,' these strategies may be undercut. The foreign satellites are offering a changed (and varying) menu of images and prescriptions from which middle class viewers may draw on in constructing their identity. These images and prescriptions, whether carried by English or Hindi channels, may sit uncomfortably with Hindu fundamentalist notions, for example....Further, the proliferation of satellite channels, particularly regional-language channels, may lead to different notions of 'nations' and 'national identity' circulating through

segments of the middle class (p. 19).

Shields and Muppidi rightly point to possible contestations of Doordarshan's centralist constructions of Hindu nation by private cable and satellite channels and to differing definitions of nation and national identity by the middle class as a consequence. In this chapter, I advance Shields and Muppidi's speculations on the dynamics of interaction between state-owned and private television in India to actual interviews with personnel at these respective networks to answer such questions as: what strategies do state-owned national and private transnational and regional television networks in India use to compete with one another? What identity do these networks seek for themselves (as evident in the goals and objectives they aspire to)? How do they define their audience community (in terms of their general perceptions of audience and of the information obtained through their audience research)?

For a critical understanding of each network's politics of identity and consumerist strategies, I conducted interviews in Bangalore with the station director, executive producer, program and news directors, and audience research officers at Bangalore Doordarshan; the vice president of sales and senior sales executive of Star TV; the regional manager of Zee TV's marketing office; and the vice president and the general manager of Udaya TV (see Appendix A for questions that guided these interviews).

The interviews revealed that the networks differed remarkably in their notions of nation, audience, competition, and station identity. In brief, personnel at Bangalore Doordarshan specified that the network's programs were geared toward the rural

audience, while those at Star TV, Zee TV, and to a certain extent Udaya TV, said their programs were designed for the urban consumer. As did those at Bangalore Doordarshan, personnel at Udaya TV stressed social objectives of education and information, while those at Star TV and Zee TV talked candidly about their focus on consumerism. While interviewees at Bangalore Doordarshan did not feel competition from the private cable and satellite channels was threatening in the near future, those at Star TV, Zee TV, and Udaya TV were very conscious of competition from other networks and discussed various strategies to combat this. Again, views about nation, audience, competition, and station objectives differed among respondents in different positions within the network's hierarchy.

## Political Economy in the International Context

The political economy approach is, in essence, a revision of the structuralist view of ideology. Murdock and Golding (1984) say that structuralism, by first analyzing form and content of cultural artifacts and then their economic base, inadequately ties autonomous cultural forms to economic forces shaping their production.

Garnham (1984) further critiques the over emphasis on ideology and recommends a revision in the basic ideas of historical materialism. He says that capitalism is a contradictory, incomplete process. Media production should be regarded as an integrated, political and ideological process. There is a conflict between artistic and industrial vision of the cultural production at both actual and ideological levels. Political economists therefore, return ideology to its confines of "false consciousness." As Hall (1994) writes however, proponents of political economy regard the economic

level of analysis as both a necessary and sufficient explanation for cultural and ideological effects.

In the context of international communication, political economy analyses of media networks are often deterministic in that they adopt a simplistic and uncritical revision of dependency theory. Dependency theory, as developed by Frank (1984) states that the flow of information, goods and services between developed countries in the center and developing countries in the periphery is conducted by political and economic elites such that the developing countries on the periphery are maintained in their positions of dependence. These theories lead to accusations of cultural imperialism which are simplistic because they assume the coherence of national cultures (Tomlinson, 1991). In fact, Appadurai (1992) notes, such rhetoric conveying fears of homogenization may be exploited by national elites for their own purposes. They may position global capitalism and commodification as an immediate threat to national culture to distract from their own hegemonic intentions.

Curtin (1997) provides a critical perspective on transnational media flows. He writes:

> Even though a global system by its nature requires that others participate, the United States nevertheless retains a dominant voice in satellite policy and technological development. Therefore what has emerged does indeed resemble a 'global village,' but it is one ruled by a powerful potentate who parades in drag under a banner promoting the 'free flow' of communication. Free flow now, as in the early 1960s, primarily means the movement of images and ideas from a few cosmopolitan centers out to the margins of the international system, and it has come to be equated ironically with the export of Hollywood programs like "Dallas" and "Dynasty;" shows that are interpreted in many parts of the world as representing the very sorts of ruthless power that earned the United States

its position of prominence in the age of global television (p. 259).

Curtin points to two issues worthy of note. First, the United States does maintain its dominant position in global media flows; and second, these media flows are *interpreted* as representative of the powerful position of the United States in the global television arena. The important question then is, *who* interprets these media flows as representative of the power of the center? In India, the interpretations of global media flows by government officials and national elites receive extensive coverage in the national media.

As we learned in Chapter 2, these elites project a coherent notion of Indian Hindu culture and attack foreign television programs for corroding this culture. Popular response to television is largely ignored because, operating again from the powerful effects paradigm, national elites construct a consensual image of television audiences and summarize that they are passive, uncritical consumers of ideologies of nation, gender, and consumerism, as constructed by foreign, primarily American, television programs.

However, efforts to contain the nation through a centralized agency such as state-owned television, are never quite accomplished. As Curtin (1997) comments:

> In essence, the challenge confronting the modern state is to contain diversity by promoting a broadly popular narrative of progress -- one that promoted a sense of collective movement forward through secular, chronological time. The tensions among and between groups must be submerged in favor of a shared destiny. Yet such attempts at incorporation are never fully successful. Some groups not only resist assimilation, they defiantly identify themselves as separate nations in search of their own territory and government structure (p. 252-253).

Regional television networks in various states in India have provided space for various groups to assert themselves as separate nations. As described in Chapter 3, Sun TV is controlled by the powerful Karunanidhi family, and JJTV is the voice of the Jaylalitha government in Tamil Nadu. However, respondents at Bangalore Doordarshan were not too concerned with the competition they faced from the private cable and satellite channels because their reach far exceeded the others. Their impressive statistics on audience reach stemmed largely from the fact that they included rural audiences and identified the rural audience as their target viewer. Yet they discussed the culture and identity of India as unified and coherent and regarded the network as a protector of this culture from foreign satellite invasion. Private cable and satellite channels on the other hand, were not concerned that they could not reach rural audiences because of the location of consumerist and political power in the urban center. Thus, respondents at Bangalore Doordarshan, Star TV, Zee TV, and Udaya TV described the identity, objectives, and audiences of their respective networks in terms of their difference from the other networks.

## Network Objectives and Identity

### Social Vision, Commercial Reality

Informants at Bangalore Doordarshan said the social and cultural role of Doordarshan as a national network was conveyed through its programming. Doordarshan provides a three-tiered service: national, regional, and local. The network's annual report states:

> In the national programmes the focus is on the national culture and the

> programmes include news, current affairs, science, cultural magazines, serials, music, dance, drama, and feature films. The regional programmes carried on all the transmitters in the concerned state also deal with similar programmes at the state level, but in the language and idiom of that particular region. The local programmes are area specific and cover local issues featuring local people (Doordarshan 1996, p. 1).

The objectives of the network are to promote social change and national integration; to stimulate a scientific temper in people's minds; to spread family planning; to control population and uplift family welfare; to provide essential information to aid agricultural production; to promote and preserve environment and ecological balance; to uplift the well-being of women, children and the less privileged; to promote interest in sports and games; and to inculcate appreciation for art and cultural heritage (Doordarshan, 1996).

In general, Bangalore Doordarshan, as are other Doordarshan kendras, is guided by a programme code which stipulates that programming should not violate moral decency, and should not pose risks to the security of the nation. The respondents discussed the station as the initiator of development objectives and the audience (specifically the rural population in general or urban and rural women in particular), as recipients of these objectives.

Nationalistic programs were most often produced to convey to the audiences that they are members of one nation. All prime time programming, said the director, was national in focus and language (Hindi), and hence, through national serials, the national programme of music, the national news bulletin, and the national Good Morning program, audiences could participate in the affairs of the national viewing community.

Although private television networks were far from threatening to Doordarshan, the director said the network had taken efficient measures to compete with the private networks. He explained that after economic liberalization, competition from the 80 - 100 private satellite channels in the country demanded that the network develop more entertainment programming to retain viewership. Thus the metro DD2 channel was introduced and regional channels were launched in each state -- all of which carried primarily entertainment-oriented channels. From a two-hour window on the national channel, regional programming jumped to around 13 hours on each of the 16 regional channels. Reflecting on these changes, he said, "These are the ways India can not only face the competition, (but) meet the requirement of the audience to the maximum extent."

The conflation of Doordarshan with India is interpreted here to be a conscious articulation of the bond between the nation and national television. This reflects the clearly defined role of Doordarshan as keeper of the nation -- a role constructed, regulated and sustained by the elites in power, as described in Chapter 3.

The director said the concerns of the corporate world did not dictate program policies. Thus, educational shows were telecast in the late afternoon when children were home from school, and agricultural programs were telecast around 7:00 p.m. when farmers were back from the fields. He said:

> I have a social commitment, and I have to be responsible for the needs of the people also. So my designing of the program has nothing to do with their (other television networks) designing. Some put six films a day. I'm not in a rat race. (If) I do put a film, I put (it) at a convenient time, for example, 9:30 at night. Daily I put a film where people after food they sit

> like in a second (movie) show and watch very quietly. And... I will (also) put a film at 12:30 (p.m.). This time is when all ladies, after their household work, they will quietly sit and watch....You have to find the life, the habit, the lifestyle and habits (of the audience), and accordingly schedule (the programs).

The director said although films were popular with audiences, the social needs of the audience assumed higher priority for the network than entertainment needs. His description of the audience -- whether farmers or women -- as those who sit 'quietly' and watch Doordarshan programs, implies an understanding of the viewer as quiet, passive and obedient. This allowed him to perpetuate the patriarchal function of the network as disseminator of educative programs for the well-being of the nation-family.

As did the director, the executive producer of network discussed the role and identity of the network in terms of its place in the national network as a whole. He discussed the network's information and education objectives as part of a national effort toward progress. Regional language was just a means through which local audiences could be told national tales of budget, politics and so on, and participate in the affairs of the nation.

The national objectives of Doordarshan shifted to a more local level for the program executive and the news executive interviewed in this study. Both executives said Doordarshan had compromised tremendously on its social objectives and had shifted its focus to consumerist ones through its increased menu of films and popular film-based programming.

The program executive said that contrary to the innovations undertaken by the network, she strived to project the social goals of the network in her selection and

production of local-specific programs. The identity of Bangalore Doordarshan, she said, was integrally tied to place. The location and characters in plays and in cultural shows such as dance and music programs were selected carefully to convey a sense of local place and context. She said:

> In our programs -- in the program which we produce in-house, we try to keep a certain representation for all the regions in Karnataka. For example, in a music program if you will -- we have All India Radio situated all over the state. We take the auditioned artists from these stations and present them in Doordarshan because it's a music program. If it's a dance program, we audition our own (local) artists; if it's a drama program, we audition our own (local) artists. But when we audition them and when we call them for a program, we make sure that we are giving enough representation to all the regions in Karnataka. Now when it comes to locations, we may not always be able to do that. In the sense it is very difficult to go to Dharwad (on the outskirts of Karnataka) and do a production over there. The attempt is definitely there -- to take out our OB van, to place it at North of Karnataka at one stage, to go along the coast at some other stage and produce programs representing people from that area, to go down to the south of Karnataka, Mysore, and to invite them into our studios.

Programs from the remote stations of Karnataka such as Dharwad and Hubli (Appendix D) take priority over those in Bangalore because such areas, famous for their historical sites, are rarely represented and any opportunity to receive coverage is exploited. Through location, accent, dress, dance, and drama style, programs produced for Bangalore Doordarshan are carefully crafted to convey a sense of place and boundary. This program executive said production quality was a prime factor in viewer's decisions. The poor production quality of development programs and the increase in films and film-based programs she said, resulted in the loss of audiences for development programs and a consequential shift by Doordarshan away from the

production of such programs.

She said the nature of her job had changed since the arrival of competition from private television. Earlier responsible for conceptualizing and producing women-oriented programs, she now scrutinized tapes from the public for the Karnataka regional satellite channel, DD9. The rotative nature of her job where, with her colleagues, she was shunted among such departments as production, screening of DD9 tapes and so on, prevented her from developing any specialization. A bulk of programs received for this channel were videotaped teleplays. Although hardly any other programs were rejected because of the great demand to fill the average of 13 hours of programming on DD9, the program executive said she was trying to get applicants to produce other genres such as talk shows, quiz programs, documentaries, and music and dance shows.

She perceived competition to occur at national and regional levels: at the national level with Hindi and English satellite channels, and at the regional Kannada language level with Udaya TV. She said Doordarshan had gone all out commercially and had changed its focus significantly from information and education to entertainment. Interactive programs with themes of development were few and presentation and production quality in these programs as in the entertainment programs as well, lagged behind the private channels. Film-based programming dominated Doordarshan's menu because these programs attracted commercial sponsorship.

The shift toward audience ratings rather than audience education and information was felt in the news department as well. A news executive and news correspondent who reported for the English, Hindi, and Kannada news said that while earlier the news was

essentially the voice of the government for the propagation of government policies, the news now included crime reporting (as did Udaya TV) -- a topic never covered before.

Thus crime coverage was included because of similar coverage in Udaya TV news. Although she considered this an unhealthy trend, the news executive said competition from Udaya TV news and news on other private regional channels was a positive influence on Doordarshan news coverage:

> The criteria for news before these private channels came up was that (it should be) totally government oriented. Totally government oriented....We have always tried to project the government's point of view. But with the private channels coming up, I think we are trying to look into it both ways. Which is a very healthy this thing. We are given an opportunity to do reporting the way we *should* be doing it. Otherwise it was quite frustrating you know, when we had to take the government's point of view. But now with the new crop of editors that we have in Delhi also, the new generation -- I don't know if it is the generation or the government's stand point that's changing, but we are trying to open up a lot.

The format of the news served to convey a sense of national identity. The news executive explained that the structure of news itself directed attention to the importance of the national over regional (state-wide news), or local (city-specific news). She said:

> We take national first, then regional, then absolutely local. That is, in our local news -- in our Kannada news that we produce. But the national news is basically national-oriented. There are very few stories which are region based unless it is something which is very unique and could be emulated by the rest of the country.

Development news was incorporated in the regional segment, and, unless major international or local events take precedence, this format was adhered to.

In summary, respondents high up in the station's hierarchy at Bangalore Doordarshan perceived the station to be a bastion of Indian culture and social

development. Those directly involved with news and entertainment, although echoing these goals, felt the network's focus had shifted from government-centred, development programming to entertainment-oriented programming. The format of the news was expanded to include alternate points of view besides that of the government, and had included crime reporting as well. In all, Doordarshan respondents felt the network was undertaking massive innovations to combat competition from private networks, yet competition itself was not an issue because the network's reach and infrastructure sustained its firm foothold as a television giant.

Despite the scramble for product differentiation, Doordarshan personnel were not too alarmed at competition from private cable and satellite television. With over 800 transmitters all across the country, the reach of Doordarshan exceeded 85 percent of the country. The perspective therefore was national rather than local, in that innovations were made on a national scale and progress of the network as a whole was viewed in terms of national ratings. The battle for the local Bangalore urban viewer was not considered a top priority. The programming menu of Bangalore Doordarshan was not chosen in response to competing menus from other networks but to fulfill the social objectives of the network, respondents said.

## An Alternative Space for Kannadigas

Udaya TV was started in June 1994, primarily to provide an alternative Kannada language channel in Karnataka. The channel uplinks to the Intelsat satellite from Singapore. The Bangalore office is responsible for generating software and sending this via videotape to Singapore to be uplinked for transmission.

The vice president of programming of Udaya TV said that various private channels in the country, such as the Hindi-language Zee TV and the Tamil-language Sun TV, were popular because they provided language and region-specific dramas, sitcoms and game shows. The Kannadiga, however, lacked a Kannada channel and was limited to the standard fare offered by the government-owned Doordarshan. Thus, to answer the need of the 'common man,' he said, Udaya TV was launched. He felt he had his finger on the pulse of the common man because of his status as a Kannada actor who was in the business of catering to the entertainment needs of Kannadigas.

Respondents said the primary goal of the network was entertainment. However, the vice president and the general manager stressed that the network projected a social focus as well, and broadcast shows that addressed legal, medical, and marital problems of its audiences. The slogan of the network was "manovasarondige, manoranjanondige, manovikasondige," which means 'the entertainment and development of the mind.'[53]

The vice-president said Udaya TV allowed Kannada-speaking people all over India -- whether in Calcutta, Nasik, or Bombay, to tune in to programs in their native language and watch Karnataka-specific locations and actors talk about the culture and heritage of the state. The identity and objectives of the network was expressed in the following exchange:

> General manager (GM): if I were a Kannadiga I would like to watch something which is happening in my mother tongue. I have a different kind of a feeling for it. But the alternative (before private television ) was

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53 Although the word *mana* translates directly into 'mind,' in the Indian context it implies mind, body, and spirit, that is, the whole being of the individual.

> what if I have to watch something in Kannada, I have to go to Doordarshan. Today the situation is changed; if you want something nice and you still feel you want to watch it in Kannada, you can watch it on Udaya TV. I think that's where we, we pulled the Kannadiga population which was watching other channels to watch our channel. You know, that's where we've made the difference....So I think *that's where we've made the difference.* A Kannadiga who was watching other channels, and watching DOORDARSHAN, we brought...
>
> Vice-president: we have *brought them back to our language.*
>
> GM: We have brought them back to watch the movie in our *own* mother tongue (Emphases in original).

Both vice president and general manager stressed the importance of Udaya TV in providing a space for Kannadigas all over India to connect through language and context with their native state and with fellow Kannadigas. Although they regarded Udaya TV as a cultural space for Kannadigas, they resisted any political implications and said the primary objective of the channel was entertainment. They said although audiences might choose Udaya TV for its language and local identity, the channel would not contribute to anti-national or pro-regional sentiments. It would only contribute to benign feelings of pride in the region as part of pride in the larger nation.

The general manager said:

> I think TV plays an important role in our lives, (but), I still feel there are other major factors which can influence you in a direction. A TV program is light-hearted most of the time. And we are not propagating anything of that nature (regional identity) on the channel at all. (We don't say) don't watch this or don't watch that, only watch this -- *language* as an aspect is handled in our programs. But it is always the positive aspects of the language. (We say) learn more of Kannada, or (promote) a kind of a program which (discusses) the language. We never try to push Kannada, I don't think that's the right attitude for any channel to do it also. Kannada as a *language* (we say), look at it, what are the various factors which have made this *language* last all this while (Emphases in original).

The respondents at Udaya TV were keenly aware of the competition from other private channels. Doordarshan was not considered a competitor because of its government ownership, reach, terrestrial transmission, and control over the infrastructure of the private channels.

Yet the structure and character of Udaya TV was articulated in terms of how it differed from Bangalore Doordarshan. The vice president and general manager said although a viewer could receive Doordarshan signals just through an antenna, Udaya TV programming required cable networking to be received on home television sets. However, the advantage they had over Doordarshan was that Udaya TV lacked the bureaucratic structure of Doordarshan. Udaya TV was run like a small family concern with no red tape or underhandedness. Also, they felt they had a better assessment of audience needs and limited their telecast of holy songs, dance programs and other cultural programs in favor of movies, talk shows and game shows, to cater to audiences' hunger for entertainment. The respondents monitored the programming schedules of other channels and brainstormed for about four to five hours every Saturday afternoon for innovative programming ideas.

Besides Doordarshan, Udaya TV faced stiff competition from its parent company, Sun TV itself. The respondents said Bangalore had a vast Tamilian population and the well-produced programs were watched by Tamilians and Kannadigas alike (many people were multilingual). Thus many programs on Sun TV were imitated to fit the Karnataka context. However, these shows flopped miserably because Bangalore's cosmopolitan population made it difficult to target the right cross-section of

viewers. Also, they felt, the Kannadiga population was not ready for the satirization of hierarchies of gender, age, and class as were those in Tamil Nadu.

Thus, Udaya TV was constructed as a primarily entertainment channel, which served as an alternative to Doordarshan for Kannadigas. The network was still struggling because of difficulties in assessing the nature of the audience. The network saw itself as clearly different from Doordarshan in its lack of bureaucracy and in its menu of entertainment programs instead of the overload of 'we-know-what's-good-for-you' programming on Doordarshan. Although the respondents here said the network in no way propagated regional identity as a political narrative against national identity, their programming ideas (apart from the hefty menu of film-based programs) and their description of the nature of the network and its programming itself highlighted their efforts at establishing an alternate space for Kannadigas. Their efforts at depoliticizing this space is interpreted as an effort to avoid controversy. Yet this effort itself points to the construction of sub-national viewing communities defined by language -- a construction worthy of note in our analysis of whether private television channels can lead to the fragmentation of the nation.

## Links Between Corporations and Consumers

Personnel in Star TV and Zee TV, contrary to those in Bangalore Doordarshan and Udaya TV, saw their respective networks as links between corporations and consumers. Star TV's annual report, Vision Into Reality (1996) states:

> India is a model for Star TV's regional businesses. Virtually all decisions are made and executed from our Mumbai and Delhi offices. Relying extensively on local management, technical, sales, creative and performing

> talent, all but five of our 200 staff are Indian nationals. Re-enforcing that policy, all of our creative endeavors are spearheaded by our Indian employees, whether in conjunction with associated or independent producers or with our partner, Zee TV. This framework enables Star to be sensitive to local traditions and culture. And most importantly, it permits us to respond to India's demands in India (p. 16).

The vice president of sales at the Bangalore Star TV office described the network as a niche English network. The telecast of US programs such as "Baywatch," "X Files," "Chicago Hope," and "NYPD Blue" gave it an American character. The Star TV head office in Hong Kong was staffed by several professionals from the Fox network in the United States and hence several ideas and concepts in programming from Fox were imported to Star TV, he said.

Star TV catered to specialized audiences, and each of its channels, Star Plus, Star Movies, Channel [V], Star Sports (now merged with ESPN) and BBC, targeted a specific audience segment. Although ratings for each channel sometimes fell into single digits, cumulatively, they often reached as high as 29 percent for Star TV and 35 percent for Zee TV.

The vice president of sales described Star Plus as a Hindi and English current affairs channel. He said it aggressively promoted the dubbing of such programs as "Baywatch" and "Bold and the Beautiful." Its increased focus on current affairs through such programs as "Newstrack" and "Awaz," its introduction of the "Hindi Comedy Hour," and of topical talk shows such as the "Priya Tendulkar Show" and "Maneka's Ark" resulted in the doubling and tripling of its ratings in 1996.

The vice president of sales also said Star TV had witnessed a transition in the

urban viewer. When the network first carried MTV, youth in various cities emulated the clothing and jargon of characters in the music videos and of the VJs themselves. He said this gradually gave way to:

> a surge of Hindi pop culture which had a different language, different style, different lingo, different dress...MTV provided the platform for a western orientation, but Channel [V] took over when MTV moved (out). It had its own brand of identity, which they (urban youth) related to. And for the first time in our country people started laughing at (them)selves...(it was) a spoof on us. (This) explains the popularity of Channel [V] because it adapted itself to the Indian conditions without actually missing out on the funkiness of the western orientation.

Star TV's channels, particularly Channel [V], he said, had cashed in on the global/local hybridity and turned it into a new popular genre of programming. It took the values and cultural icons of both the United States and India and presented them in light-hearted combinations with one another.

Shashanka Ghosh, creative director of Channel [V] said:

> When we launched Channel [V] in India we had to make sure we did not end up with a Jekyll and Hyde channel alternating between programming for international music and programming for Indian music. The difficulty lay in blending the two...the irreverent, take-it-as-it-comes spirit and youth humor of Channel [V] with the crucial Indian ethos. The magical thing is that we have actually managed a style and kind of fusion that India has never seen before and whose popularity can only be explained by the scale of copies that can be seen on other channels (Cited in "Vision Into Reality," 1996, p. 17).

The senior sales executive of Channel [V]'s Bangalore office said the channel was in a constant battle for advertising with other private channels because of its niche focus. A MODE survey conducted in April-June 1996 on 14-30 year-olds in cable and satellite homes in Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Bangalore showed that Channel [V] was

described by the respondents as sexy and stylish (82 percent), international (76 percent), high quality (60 percent), lively (57 percent), entertaining (42 percent) and friendly (38 percent). Channel [V]'s closest rival is the Hindi pop music ATN and not MTV which trails behind both of them (Channel [V]: The Chosen One! 1997). As the first foreign music Indianized channel, the senior sales executive said Channel [V] attempted to:

> reflect the tastes of urban and progressive youth. Two years ago you were brought up to be timid -- scared. Only affluent kids were able to be bold. Suddenly there's life beyond home, tuition. Pubs started springing up. Bon Jovi, Aerosmith -- (we) didn't have access to these singers. (Now they) teach you to be funky, to be hep, to have an attitude, how to dress. VJs achieve celebrity status and receive immense fan mail...It is not declasse to say you are watching Hindi pop. Now in a disco, people are dancing to Indian music. Channel [V] really gave youth its identity.

While MTV targets urban youth, Channel [V] aims at music lovers of all ages. The telecast of Channel [V] in Bangalore pubs allowed collective viewing from teenagers and young adults alike. Special programs such as "Channel [V] Viewer Awards" or "Channel [V] Music Awards" attracted sponsors and specific commercial spot packages were custom-made to suit the sponsor's product and target audience's needs.

As did respondents at Udaya TV, the vice president of Star TV said Doordarshan was not even considered a force to contend with because of its giant terrestrial status. Doordarshan's position on the Indian television scenario was relatively unproblematic for Star TV because the two networks targeted different segments of consumers. The purchasing power of the target population determined the type of advertisers who approached the network.

He said:

> Doordarshan is good for a mass brand where critical volume is very important for the profitability of the company such as Levers, or for that matter, even for Proctor and Gamble, or Cadbury's, where you have distribution spanning right across (various socioeconomic levels). But when it comes to launching new specialized product categories or high priced product categories, I think the (private) satellite network is the obvious choice.

The main strategy, he said, was to market global items through local narratives. He said, "we have a global commercial, but (we're) thinking local -- for the minute twist that will give a local flavor which you can run across various channels."

Respondents described Star TV as a network that straddled the global and the local, allowing audiences all over the South East Asia region membership through local idioms. Respondents at this office said social objectives of information and education were secondary and the business objective of the network was a primary concern. The network was considering establishing computer training centers (as had Zee TV) for urban youth, but had not yet done so.

Zee TV, a partner of Star TV, also marketed itself as a link between corporations and consumers. Its national reach and its Hindi language programming provided competition for Doordarshan in urban centres. Star TV's annual report, Vision Into Reality (1996), describes Zee TV as:

> India's home grown answer to the advent of satellite channels. While foreign networks had brought the world outside India's borders into sharper focus, Zee TV, EL TV and Zee Cinema have turned the cameras on life at home, re-acquainting viewers with humor, drama and issues of a distinctly Indian nature. Zee TV programmes consistently dominate the top-ten rated shows each week in cable and satellite households (p. 19).

Like Star TV, Zee TV had sales offices all over India. Ambience Space Sellers Limited, a private company, was commissioned to collect advertising for Asia Today Limited network (50 percent of which is owned by Rupert Murdoch), which broadcasts the Zee channel.

The regional manager of the Zee TV's Ambience Space Sellers' office in Bangalore (responsible for generating sponsors from primarily Bangalore and Hyderabad) again discussed the nature of Zee TV programming in terms of its difference from Doordarshan. She said advertisers sought Doordarshan because of its overall reach, but approached Zee TV for niche audiences.

Zee TV had established itself as a leader in cable and satellite homes. Zee TV viewers could obviously afford cable, and most likely had disposable income to purchase the luxury items advertised on it. She said the network had a progressive, urban identity, as opposed to Doordarshan which had a conservative, rural identity.

## Defining the Audience

Perceptions of audience, predictably varied among networks, as did the objectives and network identities.

### The critical rural viewer

Audience research is an important department in the Doordarshan network. Audience research focuses on two primary areas: viewer profile and program popularity. Doordarshan's Audience Research Team (DART) has panels in 33 cities and covers 20 cities across the country each week to rate DD1 programs in all these cities, and DD2 programs in nine select ones. Television rating points (TRP) are assessed by the Indian

Market Research Bureau (IMRB) which conducts audience research in such cities as Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Calcutta, Bangalore, Thiruvananthapuram, Ahmedabad and Kanpur. IMRB statistics are sought by various satellite channels as well.

The audience research officer said the network randomly polled around 600 audience members every week: 300 from Bangalore city, 200 from Tiptur, and 200 from Mysore. Viewer choices were obtained through television diaries, which are distributed at the beginning and collected at the end of each week. Samples were weighted for fair representations in gender, age, and occupational categories. The television diaries provided statistical information on the channels and programs watched. Viewers logged in the time and type of programs watched on a given day. The audience research officer said the information from these diaries was supplemented by occasional field interviews in urban and rural areas.

Respondents at this station identified the rural resident as the target consumer. The program executive said phone-in interactive programs and development programs on women's health and on general medical and legal problems were very popular with rural audiences. The network received a flood of viewer mail soon after such programs were telecast. She acknowledged the tremendous shift to films and entertainment as a marketing strategy to garner more commercial sponsorship, yet perceived her audience as the rural individual who needed to be empowered by progressive and development narratives.

The news executive also stressed the rural resident as the target viewer. She said that in general, audiences were critical news-watchers:

> From what I have noticed, they are a very aware lot and you can't take them for granted and say they don't watch Doordarshan anymore. But I have noticed that people say, on that particular day, STAR carried the news this way, and you carried it this way. So that means they have been switching channels to see how the story is being treated, not only by us, but by STAR TV, and different news bulletins that come during the day. And that's a very fascinating thing because I thought it was only we who did it -- switching channels -- seeing how they have treated this story.

She said audiences often questioned the network on its pro-government stand.

The critical awareness extended to rural audiences as well:

> No other (news) bulletin reaches there. We have the farmers who come in from their work, and the first thing they do is switch on their TVS and at 7 o'clock they watch the news. We have had responses from them, saying why wasn't this taken for the news, from our region. What if something has happened in Dharwad. (For example) there is a writer who has been honored. If he has not been honored or if he has not been recognized by us, we receive phone calls from the villages, saying why haven't you taken this. So I -- we know our rural audience is a very aware audience, so we just cannot take them for granted. We try to -- after taking the national news, we go in for regional news. (We focus on) what has happened in Bangalore, what has happened in Mangalore. For that we have different teams that go out everyday. Dharwad, Mysore, Mangalore -- all these places. And Gulbarga, we have another center which looks after the northern part of Karnataka. So they go out there and they feed news to us. So these are the regions. It may be a very small function but we try to lay stress on that also because it is the audience we are catering to.

The construction of the target audience as the rural community was interesting because textual analyses of programs -- be they development or entertainment-oriented -- on Doordarshan reveal a focus on the urban middle class (Krishnan & Dighe, 1989; Mankekar, 1993; McMillin, 1997). Pendakur (1995) writes that Doordarshan's programming is designed to serve the needs of indigenous and foreign capitalists as well as the middle and upper middle classes. Television policy is not directed to the development needs of the vast majority of the people in India. As the program and news

executives indicated, however, the social objectives of the network and its focus on the rural community was more an ideological strategy than reality.

The Urban Kannadiga

Respondents at Udaya TV said the network did not have a formal audience research unit, but obtained feedback from viewers through mail or phone-in requests (particularly for phone-in interactive shows).

The vice president of programming felt that as a retired Kannada film actor he had a good idea of what the average Kannadiga was looking for by way of entertainment. However, both vice president and general manager felt the network had not yet been able to draw up an adequate strategy to increase the ratings for Udaya TV programs.

The primary problem, they said, was language. Although they said earlier that the Kannada language was the strength of the network and differentiated it from other networks, the version of Kannada used on the network was that which was spoken in the Bangalore urban district. In the remote regions of Karnataka such as Bijapur, Mangalore, and Dharwad, dialects of Kannada and other languages such as Marathi and Tulu, were more common. Also, Bangalore was a cosmopolitan city consisting of people from all over India, speaking a variety of languages.

Kannada speakers, the respondents felt, were very conservative as well. For example, several game and variety shows lifted from Sun TV's programming and adapted to the Karnataka context proved to be flops. The general manager commented:

> We took a program like Tic Tic Tic (a game show) and did it here -- a flamboyant show, we felt. I think when we looked at it we thought it was a fantastic show. He (the moderator) was absolutely bold and he had a lot

> of life when he did that program. But it bombed very badly with the audience. Karnataka still cannot take any harsh issue as such. Tamil Nadu can take it. But I still think the people of Karnataka are very sober. They don't like anything blatantly said. But if you look at the other channels, or lets take any other Hindi private channel, they go all out. In fact they have a program called "Flop Hero and Flop Heroine of the Week." I don't think that will be accepted here in Bangalore. Issues like this took us sometime to really understand this (the nature of the audience) better.

Even a hit show, "Adarsha Dampathigalu," a version of the "Newly-wed Game,"[54] was designed so that, between rounds of questions to participating couples, elderly male members in the audience and officials from the state government were requested to come on stage and talk about the benefits of 'open communication' between husband and wife (McMillin 1997c).

The vice president, also the moderator of that show, said it was difficult to get couples to talk openly about their marital quirks, and those who were willing, decided against it because they imagined the audience to consist of parents, grandparents, and traditionalists of Kannadiga society. Game questions were non-controversial and dealt with the general knowledge of the participants, their interest in food, clothes and so on, rather than the intimate details of their relationship. However, audience mail showed that viewers had adopted the show to assess the quality of their own marital relationships and many reported they began learning about their partner's likes and dislikes so they would not fall short and lose points as did some of the couples on television.

Udaya TV, as are the private channels, is not regulated by any law (at this time of

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The vice president said he was aware of the American version much after "Adarsha Dampathigalu" had been conceptualized and produced.

writing). Yet it followed a policy of decency and morality. Both vice president and general manager said they did not telecast shows unsuitable for family viewers as a whole.

## The Urban, Affluent Consumer

Audiences at Star TV and Zee TV were defined according to their capacity as consumers. Viewer profiles for Channel [V] indicated that audiences for this channel were most likely to own durables such as color television sets (80 percent), refrigerators (71 percent), washing machines (28 percent), and music systems (18 percent). Highest ratings in cable homes remained at around 10-12 points for regular programs and touched 57 points for special events such as cricket matches and filmfare awards ("Channel [V]: The Chosen One!" 1997).

Zee TV's market report described the network as a 'family channel' with viewers who are "largely more affluent, more educated than the average television viewer (with) a higher spending capacity...The Zee viewers enjoy programmes with a contemporary look and hence they spend a large part of their leisure time watching infotaining programmes on Zee" (p. 1). This report also stated that Zee TV's innovative concepts and high quality of program production attracted and sustained audiences. Zee also played to niche audiences and divided its advertising and program rates according to gender, age, and socioeconomic income. Respondents at Star TV and Zee TV echoed the audience descriptions detailed in the reports and said their audiences were upmarket, wealthy, and critical consumers.

The vice president of sales at Star TV said audiences in Bangalore were ardent

fans of Hindi and regional language movies. This was the main reason for the success of regional language channels such as Sun TV and Udaya TV. On Star TV, English serials received mediocre ratings -- ratings that shot up once they were dubbed. English serials such as "X Files" were well-produced and hence their dubbed versions were better received than their remakes in Hindi. Also, with different regional languages segregating audiences all across the country, the dubbing of movies (particularly Disney films with their universalist themes and stereotypical portrayal of love and friendship) into regional languages was extremely popular.

Star TV relied heavily on audience research conducted by private market research organizations to develop specific viewer profiles for corporate advertisers. Statistics from these were often contradictory and failed to provide insight on qualitative aspects of viewing such as viewing context and factors influencing program choice.

In summary, Doordarshan regarded the rural audience as its target viewing community while Udaya TV, Star TV, and Zee TV isolated the urban viewer as the target audience. While Udaya TV's audience was perceived to be Kannada-speaking, conservative, and of middle and lower income, those for Star TV and Zee TV were considered to be upscale, wealthy, and with disposable income.

All networks relied on market research surveys to provide viewer profiles to supplement commercial packages for corporate sponsors. Only Doordarshan, however, had an in-house Audience Research Unit and framed such research in terms of efforts to better understand the educational, informational, social, and cultural needs of the audience. Udaya TV echoed this sentiment to a certain extent, but given its sole reliance

on advertising, limited its risks of in-house production failures and increased its menu of films to sustain its following and thus its ad revenue. Star TV and Zee TV were candid in their construction of their viewers as consumers and discussed audiences' lifestyles and attitudes only in terms of their translation into critical purchasing behavior.

Competing Identities

The down market image of Doordarshan and Udaya TV is important to note. The similarity in their approaches to audiences may, at one level, be attributed to the fact that both are indigenous channels -- one national, with programming originating from the nation's capital, New Delhi; and the other regional, with programming originating from the state capital, Bangalore.

Respondents at both networks had social interests of the viewer in mind, and despite their focus on this, conceded to commercialization for advertising revenue -- substantial in the case of Doordarshan, and completely in the case of Udaya TV.
But more important, both were constructed as middle and lower middle class networks by their own employees because of their crucial links to nation-building. Mankekar (1993) writes that "nationalism has been characterized as a middle class phenomenon, and the relationship between 'middle classes' and nationalism is a fundamental one. Personal observations and conversations with Doordarshan officials and media critics have led me to believe that the middle and lower middle classes form the core of the target audience for Indian television" (p. 547).

The key observation that nationalism is a middle class phenomenon has been made by Chatterjee (1993), Rajagopal (1995), and Shields and Muppidi (1996) as well.

This observation finds resonance in my own study in that the objectives of indigenous networks, as articulated by their respective employees, was the social development of audiences.

Doordarshan and Udaya TV were operating within the narratives of nation as propagated in political rhetoric, film discourse, and middle class family life. Respondents at these stations felt it their duty to educate and entertain masses in the rural areas (in the case of Doordarshan) and urban areas (in the case of Udaya TV). Respondents at Star TV and Zee TV, however, although Indians, were executing marketing directives from a foreign center whose primary concern was to provide non-controversial and entertaining fare to attract the maximum number of viewers and sponsors.

The differing perceptions of network identity and audience community lead to the broader question: can the presence of multiple television networks in India result in fragmented viewing communities and thus to the eventual fragmentation of the nation? Although Doordarshan retains its monopoly over audiences at present due to its reach and infrastructure, in the long run, could private regional channels in each state draw away audiences from the national network through slickly produced, regional language-specific programming? These questions are pertinent particularly in the context of political unrest in the country. Also, these questions are important because of the political interests of the owners of some of the private regional networks.

While it is obvious that a time study is necessary to understand the implications of these networks on national identity, we must avoid the trap of television-determinism

where we assume that competing definitions of network, nation, and audience necessarily result in fragmented communities each with a differing sense of nation and self. We may address these questions by beginning with an understanding of where nation, region, and community are constructed. We need to understand the resonance of these definitions within audiences to adequately understand the impact of television in India on audiences' perceptions of national identity. I undertake this task in the next two chapters.

# CHAPTER VI

## SITUATING THE TELEVISION AUDIENCE

From an exploration of network and audience identities as perceived by respondents at the television networks in Chapter 5, we learned that in the context of urban Bangalore, networks were constructed as spaces for consumerist narratives and audiences were profiled in terms of their buying power. Education and information objectives for rural and urban viewers received importance in Doordarshan. Private television channels on the other hand, overtly constructed the viewer as consumer and network as marketer.

This framing of television viewer as consumer provides a point of entry to audience analysis and allows the researcher to situate viewing behaviors within the context of daily life. In this chapter, I will describe audience-families and their homes. I will pay special attention to my position in their households to discuss dilemmas in fieldwork due to differences in power between researcher and researched.

I advance the study of nationalism and television watching as a middle and lower middle class phenomenon (Mankekar 1993) to that of low and high income families as well. I examine the daily practices within which television viewing is situated, and interrogate perceptions of national, class, religious, and gender identities in Hindu, Muslim, and Christian families from high, middle, and lower income groups. While

Mankekar (1993), Appadurai (1986), and Foster (1997) address the importance of examining consumerist behavior as an articulation of identity, I do not discuss the consumerist practices of audiences in this study because I consider it a topic worthy of a separate paper.

During my first visit to each family, I described my background as a student in the United States and said I was conducting research for my dissertation on the television environment in India. As part of this research, I was interested in how different families watched television, what their most and least favorite programs were, and what role television played in their lives. As described in subsequent sections, my presence as participant observer was accommodated at different levels in different families. Yet all were eager to learn more about me, my perspectives on Indian television, and about themselves as television watchers. Through my observations and interviews, I addressed the following questions: In the context of liberalized television, how do audience members perceive themselves -- as residents of Bangalore, as citizens of India, as members of a global community, or as individuals with multi-layered identities? What role does television play in this perception? What programs do they enjoy the most and why?

## Setting the Context

As described in Chapter 4, C.V. Ramanagar developed as a neighborhood with residents of all classes and religions, primarily because of the industrial expansion of Bangalore city. Once a village, C.V. Ramanagar now consists of several posh high-rise apartments (such as the Trinity Enclave) and houses in the Rahat Bagh Enclave, middle

class apartment complexes, and lower middle class houses and slums.

While television occupied an important place in lower income families and somewhat so in middle income families, it was discussed as performing a minimal role in the higher income families. Meanings made from programs by the audiences differed based on class and religion among families, and based on gender within the families.

## The Researcher in the House

My research in each home began with a basic mapping of the household and the location of the television set within it. I was interested in other technology within the household as well. Morley (1989) writes that an examination of media usage within the home combines both the interpretation of why and how media are used, and becomes a "sociology of leisure." Thus, the task involves situating "individual viewing within the household relations in which it operates, and to insist that individual viewing activity only makes sense inside of this frame .... It is to begin to consider the differential models of viewing engaged in by different types of viewers, in relation to different spaces within the organization of domestic life" (p. 36).

## Television for "Time Pass"[55]

Television occupied a pride of place in Padma (35), Saraswati (34), and Kareema's (34) families. Padma and Saraswathi's families earned less than Rs. 2,500 (USD 62.5) a month, while Kareema's family received a total income of around Rs. 3,500 (USD 87.5) a month because of the larger number of working members. These

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"Time pass" is a common colloquialism to denote leisure activity, particularly eating peanuts on commuter trains, to pass the time.

families described television as primarily a medium of entertainment to pass the time.

Padma and Saraswati, maids to air force families, lived in the maids' quarters constructed adjacent to and adjoining the air force officer's quarters. The maids' quarters consisted of one main room with built-in shelves, a tiny kitchen, and a bathroom divided into a bathing area and a toilet. The main room doubled as living room and bedroom. These quarters were accessed by a staircase at the back of each building, separate from the main staircase and elevators in front of the building that led to the houses of the air force families. In both Padma and Saraswati's houses, the main room held a double cot pushed to the right wall of the room, a small black and white television set at the foot of the cot by the doorway, and a folding chair in the far left corner.

As in the case of Padma and Saraswathi's families, Kareema had obtained living quarters for her family by virtue of her work as a maid for a family residing in the affluent Rahat Bagh enclave. The two adjacent rooms of her house, both with doors leading onto a small verandah, served as bedroom and living room, respectively. The television was located in the first of these rooms and was placed below a shelf which held the family's two-in-one tape recorder. A large crate in a corner of the verandah was crammed with cooking utensils, spices, and a stove. Kareema cooked in the verandah in the mornings and in front of the television in the evenings.

Padma's husband, Ganesan (41), was an autorickshaw driver who had battled alcoholism and who now, through Padma's prayers, she claimed, was fighting hard to stay away from drink. Padma and Ganesan had met in their native place, Kolar. Ganesan's proposal of marriage sounded very attractive to Padma's parents because,

unlike other men in the community, he had demanded only a moped as dowry. Padma and her family learned of his alcoholism after they had consented to the marriage. They still went through with the wedding because Padma feared a broken engagement would cause people to speculate on her character and ruin her chances of ever getting married. She discontinued her studies just short of getting a high school diploma, and on her mother-in-law's command, changed her name from Sagai Mary[56] to Padma so nobody would know she was a Christian. Ganesan, however, called her Mary at home, and she was happy to be able to continue her Sunday visits to the local Catholic church. Padma and Ganesan said it was in the children's interest that they charaded as a Hindu couple because an inter-religious marriage might cause people to speculate that theirs was a love and not arranged marriage sanctioned by elders. Padma was deeply religious however, and felt her prayers to the Virgin Mary were what held the family together.

Padma and Ganesan's efforts at emphasizing to me in particular and to their community in general that their marriage was an arranged and not love marriage, is an affirmation of the norms of the institution of marriage in India. Derne's (1995) analysis of Hindi films and audiences showed that romantic love in films was received with skepticism because the bond between a husband and his wife was perceived to pose a threat to the bond between the husband and his parents. During his interviews with male film-goers, Derne (1995) found that his respondents insisted that love marriages didn't last and that parental support and parent selection of the bride (or groom) was crucial for a stable marriage.

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[56] Mary of Perpetual Succor

Harlan and Courtright (1995) comment that:

> The marriage arrangement becomes the primary context for sorting out where a particular family, lineage, and kin group ranks in relation to others. Through marriage, a family's status may be maintained, strengthened, or weakened. Because a marriage affects the status of the entire family and its lineage, it is deemed too important a decision to leave to the persons actually getting married. Rather, the decision rests with the heads of extended family units. Consequently arranged marriages are the norm; marriages undertaken by the marrying parties themselves, so-called love marriages, are considered deviant, even dangerous (p. 5).

A love marriage therefore, is taboo because it is a public affirmation that the bond between the partners is superior to that between a son and his parents. Ganesan's mother, to avoid conflict among the relatives and to ensure that the family would not have any problems when looking for a husband for their daughter in the future, ordered Padma to change her name from Sagai Mary.

Padma and Ganesan's daughter, Chitra (7), and son, Manigandan (5) were in upper and lower kindergarten, respectively. Padma was extremely diligent in making sure the children went to school everyday and kept up with their homework. She requested that I visit either during the day, or after 7:00 p.m. in the evening so that my visits would not interfere with the children's homework between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. While Ganesan's job kept him out of the house from about 7:30 in the morning to about 7:00 in the evening, Padma's work kept her away between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon, and then again from about 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. She worked later hours (usually until 9:00 p.m.) when her employees were hosting a party. Padma felt happy that her employee was considerate of her time, and pressed her to work late only on rare occasions.

Observations with this family were conducted over a week where I would visit them between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. each evening when the whole family was home. I visited Padma a few times in the afternoon to observe her mid-day activities and television watching.

Observation sessions initially were construed as social visits and I was served coffee or tea. During these sessions, I often found myself a part of a group of neighbors who crowded into the room to watch television. Padma was extremely apologetic that I had to watch television with the neighbors who walked in and out of her living room freely.

Of these, an *ajji* (old woman) would sternly walk in and sit on the cot while the others -- adolescent and younger children -- would sit giggling and chatting on the floor. The *ajji* would belt out a sharp word or two to tell someone to sit up, or someone else to stop giggling. Padma seemed in awe of her, but explained to me that there was nothing she could do about her daily television visitors because it was taken for granted that her house was the "television room" and she would be considered proud and arrogant if she denied them this evening ritual. The crowd usually departed around 8:00 p.m. when the evening news began. Padma would then bring her cooking to the living room and cut vegetables or roll dough for *chappatis* (Indian bread) in preparation for dinner at 8:30 p.m. Padma and her visitors gradually grew used to my presence, and for the most part, ignored me while they watched television and commented to each other about what they watched.

Saraswathi's family consisted of herself, a son, Ramesh (17), and a daughter,

Maheshwari (14). Ramesh was a construction worker and his hard labor since he was about nine-years-old had stunted his growth making him look no more than 12 or 13 years of age. Maheshwari was a quiet and thoughtful 8th grade student at the nearby Catholic school. Saraswathi's ailing husband who was in and out of hospital with typhoid, used his illness to emotionally blackmail her into making special concessions for him. He often moved into his sister's house a few floors down to spite Saraswathi. Tired of his behavior, Saraswathi took another lover and hence ran an emotional personal life shunting between loyalty to each of the men. Yet she remained bright and cheerful in all her chores, laughing at most of her life's foibles.

Observation sessions at Saraswathi's house were conducted between 7:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. over a week as well. The evening sessions were necessary because all members of this family were away at work and school during the day. As with Padma, I had lengthy conversations with Saraswathi during the day, when her children were away. During these conversations we discussed her viewing choices, lifestyle, and perspectives on consumerism and family life. Married at 19, Saraswathi often felt frustrated that she couldn't leave her obligations to husband and children behind and live on her own.

During initial visits, Saraswathi would unfold a chair for me to sit on, but soon conceded to my request to sit on a mat on the floor. I had learned at Padma's house that my position on the chair isolated me as a researcher from the rest of the household, and although I had been accepted as a daily feature after my initial visits, was still regarded as an outsider with questions.

My position on the floor, in Saraswathi's house, I found, made a big difference.

Saraswathi, Maheshwari, and Ramesh at first grinned at me in bewilderment and then joined me on the mat. They still kept a distance, but chatted with me about their work and school and asked me questions in turn about my work and school. Gradually they too went about their routines of cooking and homework and sparred back and forth with friends and relatives who dropped in to watch television with them. Although I couldn't negate my outsider status, I realized I had entered a more intimate level with Saraswathi's family than with Padma's family.

Saraswathi also did her cooking in front of the television. Maheshwari occasionally did her homework, but often helped her mother cut vegetables while watching television as well. Interestingly, television, in Saraswathi's household, served as more than a medium of entertainment or 'time pass' as it did in Padma's home. The television also embodied additional income and was pawned to the local pawn broker for about Rs. 1000 (USD 25) a year, when the family was hard up for money. Saraswathi often asked her employees for advances on her salary to rescue the television set when the deadline for its payment drew near.

Kareema's husband, Anwar, (42), served as a watchman for the same family Kareema worked for. Kareema and Anwar lived with their two sons, Rehmatullah (18) and Azmatullah (14) who worked as office boy in a real-estate office, and as welder, respectively.

After sending the menfolk to work every morning, Kareema would finish her daily chores at her employer's house. This work was usually meager since her employers were both journalists who were often abroad on assignments, and whose

children were away at boarding school. After her morning work, Kareema would fire up her kerosene stove and bring it into the room that housed the television set. She would then cut vegetables and cook the day's meals while watching television. The family did not have a cable connection, yet received cable programs by tweaking their antenna to receive the signals.

My visits to Kareema's family were conducted in the evenings between 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. because this was their prime television watching time. Anwar, Rehmatullah and Azmatullah were usually home from work at this time, although the sons sometimes came home much later. As with Padma and Saraswathi's families, I visited Kareema's family again during the day and over the weekend to explore differences in their daily routines during the daytime and weekends as well. Also, weekend television is quite different from weekday television, and it was necessary for me to extend observation and interviews to weekends to understand consumption of weekend programs.

As in Padma's house, I was made to sit on a chair in Kareema's house. This was a necessary position since bedding and pillows were rolled up along the walls of the room. The small size of the room placed me almost directly in front of the television -- a position that exacerbated my outsider status and frustrated me because I could not be a part of the family viewing context. Also, although Anwar sat on the floor watching television with Kareema, as soon as I entered he would draw up a chair and sit beside me to ensure his position of power in the house in relation to my power as visiting researcher.

After my first visit, I was aware that I had some key issues of power to work through during my time with this family. I knew I had to negotiate for a less obtrusive viewing position, yet had to be ready for resistance to this negotiation from both Anwar and Kareema. On my second visit, however, my problem of central seating was alleviated by the visit of Kareema's mother. The elderly woman was stretched out on a mattress on the floor and Kareema had occupied her position by the door with her stove, preparing the evening meal. Since I could not watch television from the center of the room and block her mother's view, some of the bedding was pushed aside and I was able to situate my chair against the wall, in a less conspicuous position. This remained my position for the rest of the observations, and as in Padma and Saraswathi's houses, I soon came to be accepted as a daily evening feature and was gradually ignored.[57]

The viewing contexts in these three lower income families echo those of Mankekar's (1993) sessions with lower and lower middle class television viewing families in urban New Delhi. Mankekar notes that the families in her study often watched television in the evenings with visiting relatives and neighbors. Seating arrangements differed with the gender, household position and age of the viewers. She writes:

> Power relations within families were sometimes reflected in the ways in which people arranged themselves around the television set: the older generation (usually men but sometimes older women as well) would be seated on the few chairs present in the room; the children would squat on

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[57] I understand I could never fully achieve insider status or be fully ignored. However, I explain my position within each household to describe the level to which my presence within these families was accommodated.

> the floor. Very seldom did I see women, especially daughters-in-law, sitting with the rest of the family: not only was it considered inappropriate for them to sit with the men (particularly in the North Indian families) but more important, they were the ones responsible for the housework. Because I was treated as a visiting 'daughter of the house' by most of these families (and, undoubtedly because of my class position), I would often be made to sit on a chair or, as they became more informal with me, on the floor with the older daughters (p. 35).

The manifestation of power relations in seating arrangements as described by Mankekar (1993) are somewhat reflected in this study. For example, I was asked to sit on a chair by all the low income families while the children squatted on the floor. However, there were several differences in expressions of power as well. First, it was only in Kareema's house that Anwar chose to sit on a chair beside me. Their sons Rehmatullah and Azmatullah either chose to leave the room, or sit on the floor in the corner, whispering their comments to each other.

In Padma's house, Ganesan sat between the kitchen and the living room, at a short distance from the viewing crowd consisting of female neighbors and their small children. He said, "It's your luck that I am sitting here. Because normally if there are any ladies or other visitors, I (choose) not to be here. I will go outside. Because I get very shy, I leave."

Observation sessions also revealed that contrary to Mankekar's (1993) study, the women more than men were likely to visit television homes during the daytime and evenings. This is interpreted here as a function of the socioeconomic role of the women in these households. Through their work as maids, these women provided housing, utilities, food, and even cable connections for their families. The males in these families

had to find jobs in nearby industries or construction sites. The women, therefore, as primary providers of daily amenities, were primary benefactors of these as well, and through a subversion of the male-female hierarchy brought about by their economic power, formed a majority of the television viewing groups in respective television homes in the colony of maidservants.

In general, observation sessions and interviews with Padma, Saraswathi, and Kareema's families indicated that television was the main source of diversion. Movies, film-based shows, and family dramas were the most popular. All respondents said they knew the situations brought to them on television were fictional, but enjoyed participating in the foibles of the rich and eccentric characters vicariously.

## Television for Education

Observations and interviews were conducted in very different contexts in the houses of Janaki (35), Azeezunnissa (52), and Shanti (37), of Hindu, Muslim and Christian middle income families, respectively. The monthly income of these families lay between Rs. 6000 (USD 150) and Rs. 15,000 (USD 375). These families said television served to inform and educate them. For Janaki and Shanti's families specifically, television was considered a good source for educative programs.

Janaki and Azeezunissa lived with their families in Basavanagudi which is a conservative, predominantly Kannadiga neighborhood in Bangalore south. The two families are neighbors, yet rarely speak to each other. Rather, they constructed each other in terms of their difference in religion and lifestyle (for example, Janaki wondered why her Muslim neighbor kept the doors and windows of their house closed most of the

time, while Azeezunissa and her daughters wondered why their Hindu neighbors in general, liked to gossip over the compound walls).

My visits to these families were limited to three each on alternate days of the week with the last one occurring on a weekend. The class of the families played a crucial role in limiting the time spent with them. Quite simply, it was difficult for these families to understand my research purpose and need for repeated visits to their homes. While families in the low income group expressed their delight at having me watch television with them, the middle income families found it hard to comprehend why I would want to come back to India to study Indian television and audiences.

From my responses to their queries on my family background, they realized I was from a middle-class background as well. To a large extent, I was a symbol of upward mobility for them. I had somewhat defeated my purpose in leaving the country and escaping my middle-class limitations, by basing my research in India and studying Indian audiences. The distance between me as researcher and them as respondents seemed to have been artificially created by my research objectives.

Although the number of observation sessions in these homes was limited, the time of each session spanned about three hours in the evening, when all the family members were home. Through these sessions and interviews, I felt my research questions were answered adequately.

Janaki and her husband, Chandrashekharaiah (a government employee, 45), lived with their daughters, Deepa (16), Shilpa (13), and Megha (10) in their ancestral home. Deepa was a first year science student at a local college, while Shilpa and Megha were in

the 9th and 5th grades, respectively. The modest home seemed typical of a middle class Hindu household. The living room had smudged green walls, a diwan (low cot), and a faded sofa. The television set occupied the far end of the room. I sat in a chair by the door, furthest from the television set, so I would be as least conspicuous as possible. Of course, I knew my presence would be felt, yet did not anticipate the function I would serve for Janaki.

I soon learned that Janaki was somewhat lonely because her husband and children were away all day on weekdays. I was somebody she could talk to. She narrated lengthy histories of various family members sometimes to an extent to which her body was shaking with the effort. She hoped to complete her B.A. through correspondence, a task she had begun before she had children. She had married young, and although the family had enjoyed a comfortable life with servants and a huge house in J.P. Nagar (an adjoining neighborhood), they had moved to her father's house in Basavanagudi because it was convenient for the children's schooling. Janaki was not happy with her position as a middle class housewife, and felt her gender and early marriage unfairly placed her in a position where she could not move upward and achieve her dreams of higher education, and was doomed to stagnate as housewife and mother.

The family watched television extensively although the children were diligent enough to do so only after they finished their homework. Janaki was glad they didn't have cable because she was sure the children's television watching hours would increase exponentially. She was content with partial cable reception obtained by adjusting the antenna. The children however, wanted cable and were disappointed with their mother's

choice not to acquire a connection.

Azeezunnissa's family consisted of her husband, Munir Khan (60), a retired government employee, two daughters, Rubina (27), and Shabana (25), and three sons, Suhel (24), Shakeel (23), and Jameel (17). Azeezunissa was a headmistress at a local Urdu school and was looking forward to her impending retirement. Rubina had completed her B.A. and then her M.A. through correspondence, and was now married. She lived with her husband in Kolar, the family's native place, and was a housewife. Shabana had bachelor degrees in science and education, and worked as a chemistry schoolteacher. Suhel, having completed his bachelor's degree in science, was pursuing a master's degree in business and worked as an agent for a finance company. Shakeel had finished his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering, and had completed a computer course as well. He now worked for Suhel. Finally, Jameel was studying toward a bachelor's degree in business management.

The family home, similar in construction to Janaki's house, was crammed with furniture, including a large entertainment center. Two sofa sets (a sofa and two armchairs) were placed in rows along the walls on either side of the room. A wrought iron and glass coffee table occupied the space between the sofas. Brightly colored curtains adorned the doors and windows and the entertainment center housed a large television set and a music system. Rubina's husband was in the Gulf, and the family's combined earnings allowed them to indulge in various luxury items. Azeezunissa, Munir Khan, and their children said they watched television extensively, and rarely ate at the dining table anymore. The living room, since the arrival of television in their home in

1982, was now a dining space as well.

On my visits for observations and interviews at this house, I occupied a comfortable position in an armchair and was drawn into all family conversations. As in Janaki's house, I participated in television watching as a fellow audience member. I reserved time after I came back from the sessions to record my observations for the day and formulate questions to keep in mind for my next visit.

Shanti's family resided in the air force officer's enclave in C. V. Ramanagar. Shanti's husband, Pratap, (43), an air force officer, was away on an assignment. Their daughter, Shifrah (15), and son, Nithin (11), were in the 11th and 7th grades, respectively. As in Janaki and Azeezunissa's families, I was asked several questions about my family background, my life in the United States, and the reason I was undertaking such a research project.

The television set in Shanti's home was placed in her bedroom, at the foot of the bed. While Shanti and I sat on armchairs at one end of the room and watched television or chatted, Shifrah and Nithin would lie on the bed and occasionally argue over which channel to watch, or taunt each other about their viewing choices. Shanti said the family's Christian faith and traditions kept the children above television's consumerist influences.

As did Janaki, Shanti also felt lonely when Pratap was away on assignment, and said she was totally unprepared for him to leave on his latest sortie. As with Janaki, I was somebody Shanti could talk to about issues of parenting, religion, and television influences.

In these middle income families therefore, I was treated as a friend and as an equal. Members of these families had almost as many questions about my background as I had for them. They drew me into their conversations and commented about television shows to me, a fellow television-viewer. They found it difficult to understand why I had to visit them repeatedly, and used conversation and questioning to alleviate their discomfort at my presence. Conversations during observation sessions helped greatly to diminish the distance between me as a researcher and them as respondents.

Television As a Waste of Time

The internationality of Ruksana (44), Sumedha, (44), and Susan's (42), families from higher income Muslim, Hindu and Christian homes respectively, was obvious ever since my first visit to their homes. These families had monthly incomes exceeding Rs. 35,000 (USD 875). These three families said although they enjoyed television, it was a waste of time, and played a minimal role in their education and entertainment.

Family members spoke to each other in English and they accepted my international status as foreign-returned scholar without much comment. I was not asked as many questions as in the middle and lower income families. My position as a returning native of Bangalore and as a student researching a project, was accommodated without surprise.

Sumedha, who had a bachelor's degree in science, was a writer and had just completed a manuscript of a children's story book. Her husband, Deepak, 49, was a creative director at a major advertising agency. Their daughters, Kaveri, 15, and Lavanya, 13, were in the 10th and 8th grades, respectively. My visits to this family were

conducted from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. every day for a week. Family interviews were conducted over the weekend. Through my observations, I learned that television played a less important role in this family than it did in the lower and middle income families.

The family's spacious, posh house located in the Rahat Bagh Enclave had several rooms, and I initially found myself in the awkward situation of sitting alone in the living room while Kaveri did her homework in her bedroom, Lavanya walked their cocker spaniel, and Sumedha chatted on the telephone. Also, the family owned three television sets which were placed in the guest bedroom (which served as the family den and television room as well), in the common landing on the first floor between the parents' and daughters' bedrooms, and in the parents' bedroom, respectively. I did not anticipate that the family would accept my role as a participant observer so literally. From my very first visit, after initial greetings, I was left to take notes and observe activities as family members went about their routines, seemingly unaware of my presence. Occasional comments from Kaveri to me were quickly hushed by Sumedha who would say, "Shhh -- she is not supposed to be here." This, of course, indicated a heightened awareness of my presence rather than a lack of it. However, as my initial visit wore on, and during subsequent visits, the family let me in with minimal comment and went about their chores.

On a typical day, Kaveri and Lavanya came home from school around 4:30 p.m. and would have a hefty meal with their mother. They would then do their homework, take the dog for a walk (in turns), clean their rooms, shower, and watch television. Television watching was conducted later in the evening, around 8:00p.m., but the family

usually started the evening by watching "Charles In Charge" on Star Plus at 5:30 p.m. The children went to an international school on the outskirts of Bangalore, and their curriculum included world history, geography, and international affairs. Their conversations at home included talk about racism in the United States as often as religious riots in northern India. Through conversations during observation sessions and the family interview, I learned that this family saw itself as an international family, comfortable in any country and context. Although Hindu by birth, they resisted such definition and said they subscribed to such universal concepts as peace and love rather than the tenets of any one religion.

Ruksana's family was a blend of traditionalism and internationalism. Ruksana's husband Lakshman, 52, was a franchisee operator of the Siticable network and provided cable connections to several homes in the neighborhood. Their daughter, Kashvi 17, and son Karam, 14, studied in an international school as well. The family lived in the Rahat Bagh enclave and their home was filled with antiques from Ruksana's rich Muslim heritage. Ruksana's family once owned the land of the Rahat Bagh enclave, and several of her relatives lived in the same area, sharing the ancestral property.

Ruksana considered herself a staunch Muslim and hoped her children would choose to be Muslims as well. Lakshman, a Hindu, was not particular about which religion the children chose to adopt. Lakshman's opinions on religion and on the children's upbringing were often overridden by Ruksana's strident views on the same. Thus the home was run on Ruksana's specifications while Lakshman, somewhat an outsider in the affluent Muslim family-neighborhood, poured his energies into his

satellite and cable business.

For Kashvi and Karam, religion was irrelevant. As did Kaveri and Lavanya, they talked about universals such as love and peace rather than the specifics of any one religion. They discussed American programming on Star TV as their common viewing choice. Observations and interviews with Ruksana's family were conducted over a week, while the family interview was conducted over the weekend when all members were home.

The family had two television sets -- one in a family den, and one in Ruksana and Lakshman's bedroom. The children watched television in the den when their friends visited, but most often watched the television in her bedroom. The family rented videos as much as they watched movies on television. As in Sumedha's house, my position in Ruksana's house was initially awkward because family members engaged in various activities in different parts of the house while I sat in the living room. Gradually, however, I could observe family routines from my position in the living room and participate in television watching with the members.

Observation and interviews with Susan's family were conducted over several weeks. Specifically, I had to visit this family over four weekends because that was when their daughters Lakshmi, 22, and Vidya, 20, were home from their respective hostels in the city. However, I often visited Susan and John and observed their television watching habits on weekdays.

Susan and her husband John, 60, a businessman, were involved in opening a take-out cafeteria called "Sue's Kitchen" in Indiranagar, an adjacent neighborhood. The

internationality of this family was strongly evident in Susan and John's conversations about their respective lives in Trinidad and India, and about their visits to London and Paris. Lakshmi and Vidya were working toward bachelor's degrees in tourism and law, respectively. Both girls lived in the hostels of their respective colleges, but came home for the weekend. Apart from my weekday visits to Susan and John, I visited the family on Sunday evenings from around 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. when they watched television or chatted together.

As in Sumedha's and Ruksana's house, I sat in the living room during observation sessions. In Susan's house, however, the television set was placed in the living room, making it easier for me to participate in television watching. Observation sessions in this family revealed that John watched television extensively while Susan hardly did at all. Vidya and Lakshmi watched television for about five to six hours a day on weekends. Despite his extensive television watching, John was adamant to point out, during the family interview, that television was a waste of time and played no role in his life.

In all the high income families, I was accepted as a researcher without much comment. All families accommodated me within their daily routines without the initial discomfort or puzzlement exhibited by the lower and middle families. These high income families perceived me, a foreign-returned student, as just another aspect of their international lifestyles.

The central issue here is of course, my position of power in relation to these respondents. While low income families felt it was my privilege to interview them, and

the middle income families were unsure as to what privilege I had in interviewing them, my equals, the high income families felt it was their privilege to allow me to interview them. As in the middle income families, I learned that in these families I would be drawn into conversation and had to devote time to observation notes after the sessions were over. However, it was through these conversations that I learned about the family's position in the neighborhood, relations with neighbors, personal and professional lives, and television habits.

It was interesting to note that most members of the high income families spoke about their perceptions of television and national identity in the third person. They insisted on talking about the passive, uncritical television viewer in general, regardless of my repetitive, reframed questions to get them to talk about their personal feelings. The frequent and common use of the third person in the higher income families is interpreted here as an assertion of power where these families felt themselves to be critical viewers unlike the passive rural and urban lower and middle class viewers in the city. As critical viewers, they felt confident about commenting on the low-standard fare on television and its detrimental effects on average viewers. I knew I had to negotiate through this expression of power and adopted such direct questions as "What do *you* think" to solicit the respondents' personal views on television and national identity.

In this chapter I have introduced the families in this study and have described my position as researcher within them. While perceptions on television differed among members within each family, overall patterns based on class, religion, and gender emerged. These patterns are discussed in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER VII

## MULTIPLE CHOICES, DIFFERENTIATED VIEWING

Audience responses to questions on viewing choices and channel loyalties showed that language, religion, and class played major roles in determining what programs each family watched. Perceptions of audience and network identity between respondents at the television stations and audiences at home, were remarkably similar. All families, except the middle-class Hindu family, felt Doordarshan excluded them in its narratives and targeted the rural viewer. They described the Doordarshan audience as backward, low income, and rural -- an audience far removed from their own urban, progressive contexts. These families preferred private channels such as Sun TV, Zee TV, and Star TV because of their slick, language-specific programming and progressive narratives. The middle class Hindu family, although echoing these perspectives, felt they were protected by Doordarshan's development narratives from the corrupt, vulgar messages on cable television.

Differing viewing preferences lead us to the broader question: in the present context of political unrest in the nation, can the intensification of localized, regional programming lead to the fragmentation of the nation state? As we shall see in this chapter, all respondents felt their identity as Indians persisted beyond superficial changes in the television and political environment. They felt that both television and politics

were unreal and that other than provide diversion, these did not influence their sense of identity or place. Again, it is important to keep in mind that this study was conducted when most families had received cable hookups recently. This study sets up a framework for a similar analysis several years down the line, to examine the influence of private channels and their narratives of global and local community, on the national identity of their audiences.

This chapter contains a discussion of the viewing preferences of each family and the reason for these preferences. The discussion is divided according to the income level of the families. This is because audiences themselves discussed their identities and their perspectives on television as influenced by their income levels. For example, the lower and middle income families expressed in general that television offered audiences like them, who had limited income, an opportunity to see lifestyles and places they could not ordinarily afford to participate in. High income families, on the other hand, discussed their interest in foreign, English-language channels as a natural aspect of their affluent, international lifestyles, and criticized vernacular language programming as dull, staid, and directed to the middle and lower income classes. These emphatic articulations of class consciousness therefore, prompted the organization of audience's perceptions of television and national identity according to their income groups.

### "Why Watch Anything Else When There is Sun TV?"

Sun TV was a favorite in Padma's family. Ganesan said he enjoyed late-night English movies on Star TV because of the extensive fighting in these movies. According to him, his and Padma's television preferences differed because of their

differences in gender. Ganesan said that as a housewife, Padma spent most of her time at home, and was not exposed to as many languages as he was. Thus, she enjoyed Tamil films, film songs, and family-oriented movies on Sun TV. Ganesan's job as an autorickshaw driver took him around the city and provided him greater exposure to languages and people from different parts of the country. He could therefore enjoy the Hindi and English language channels such as Star TV and Zee TV as well.

The children, Chitra and Manigandan, although very young, had learned their gendered preferences from their parents. Manigandan, who watched his father in awe, shouted out that he too watched fights and the evening news, as his father did. Chitra said she preferred film songs on Sun TV. She enjoyed serials because of the story format and was eager to learn what happened next. Padma and Ganesan said the children enjoyed *bommai picture* or cartoons, on Star TV and Heart TV (a small private channel).

Doordarshan and Udaya TV were not watched in this household because other than Ganesan, the family could not understand Hindi or Kannada. As Padma explained:

> Although I have lived in Karnataka all my life, I have lived in a Tamil home. I haven't had to learn Kannada. (So) what's the point of watching something you don't understand? *Especially* when there's Sun TV?

Thus, Sun TV recreated for Padma, the Tamil community to which she belonged. This function of the channel was particularly important for her because she felt she did not belong to the community of maids and their families in the air force colony. Padma said she had never worked as a maid before and had kept her job a secret from several members in her family who would be shocked that she worked as a maid. She had taken

on this job when the family was finding it hard to survive on Ganesan's erratic salary -- erratic because of his alcoholism. Padma had learned about the benefits of working for an air force family from a friend, and now was happy that her family received free accommodation and utilities in return for her service.

Besides movies and serials, Padma and Ganesan watched Sun TV news regularly. They felt the news provided information on places they would never visit in their lifetimes. Before the family had cable, Padma occasionally watched Doordarshan news. Ganesan said he also watched Sun TV news to learn about political affairs in Tamil Nadu and in New Delhi. The family rarely had conflicts over channels because Ganesan watched English movies after the family went to sleep around 10:00 p.m.

Ganesan and Padma had rules about their children's television schedules. Padma usually turned on the television at 6:00 p.m., when Ganesan came home from work; when he came home later, she turned it on at 7:00 p.m. so the children could finish their homework before they watched television. On weekends, Chitra and Manigandan watched television through the day for the weekend movies, and often had to rush through their homework on Sunday evenings.

In general, this family enjoyed serials and family-oriented films. Ganesan said their lives changed dramatically after they received a cable connection three weeks prior to this interview. They now were never bored and always had something to watch. Before they had cable, the children played in the park all evening. Now however, they hurried through their homework as soon as they came home so they could watch television.

Television in this house was for "time pass," or for mindless diversion. Padma and Ganesan said they enjoyed television for its entertaining serials and films and found the news useful, but beyond that, television played a minimal role in their daily routines.

While television was a medium that helped members of Padma's family pass the time, television, in Saraswathi's home, was an instrument of control. In the absence of a steady male authoritative figure in the household, Saraswathi felt the television was the only way to discipline the children and establish her authority. She had first preference on what programs to watch. When she was upset with the children, she would switch to a Hindi language channel because neither Ramesh nor Maheshwari knew the language, while she did.

Saraswathi complained that her son Ramesh was becoming increasingly uncontrollable and often refused to recognize her authority. Ramesh's enjoyment of Tamil films on Sun TV and Raj TV provided another site for Saraswathi to assert her parental role. To punish her disobedient son, she sometimes forbade him to watch a certain program, or tore down posters of his favorite actors which he had pasted all over the two-roomed house. She often lamented that Ramesh didn't go to work when a movie starring his favorite actor was telecast, yet she felt the television was necessary inclusion for their entertainment needs. Thus the television in this house was a symbol of control and struggle between Saraswathi and Ramesh, as much as it was a medium of entertainment.

Maheshwari enjoyed television for the Kannada language serials and films on Udaya TV. She preferred Kannada to Tamil programs because she felt Tamil programs

contained an undue amount of melodrama.

Needless to say, conflicts often arose over what channels to watch. Saraswathi served as arbitrator and her choice always won. Thus, the family settled down to watch Hindi programs when Saraswathi was angry with both children, or to Maheshwari's choice if she was angry at Ramesh.

In Kareema's household, Hindi language channels on Doordarshan and Zee TV were most popular because as Tamilian Muslims, they spoke only Urdu, Tamil, and Hindi. They barely understood Kannada.

Kareema and Anwar were able to watch the afternoon Hindi-language soaps such as "Shanti," "Aurat," "Waqt ki Raftaar," "Itihaas," "Yug," and "Swabhimaan" that ran for three consecutive hours in the afternoon on DD1, because their work as maid and watchman respectively allowed them to stay home most of the day. Their sons Rehmatullah and Azmatullah returned home from work only after 8:00 p.m. and stayed up late watching Hindi or Tamil films on Star TV and Sun TV respectively. Both Rehmatullah and Azmatullah also enjoyed the late-night horror show, "Betaal" on the DD2 channel. Although the family didn't have a cable connection, they could receive cable channels by adjusting the antenna. As in Padma and Saraswathi's houses, the family watched television all day on Sunday for the Hindi and regional language films on Doordarshan, and, when they could receive clear cable signals, on Sun TV and Zee TV.

While Padma and Ganesan were avid news watchers and Saraswathi and her children said they disliked the news because it was boring, Anwar said he enjoyed

watching the news on channels such as Sun TV, DD1, DD2. He bought the paper every day because he wanted to keep up with what was happening in the world. He said "In our life, we have only one story -- our story. But in television, we see other people's lives, we learn about world stories. We cannot go and travel and see other places. It (the news) provides general knowledge." The other members of the family however, were not interested in the news because they found it boring. Anwar was quick to speak for Kareema and said that "she is not interested (in the news) and she doesn't know *anything*. Only if a bomb goes off somewhere, or a building crashes somewhere, she watches with interest."

As in Padma and Saraswathi's houses, the men-folk and children did not do any other activities while watching television. As did Padma and Saraswathi, however, Kareema did her cooking in front of the television. Kareema said she watched television all day to pass the time. She didn't visit friends or go to the movies. Besides visiting her mother in a nearby neighborhood, she didn't do much else than watch television. Anwar said laughing, "She makes dosais, chutneys, everything right here -- night meals, everything. If the serial is nice, all work *bandh* (stops). Only television."

Conflict over which channel to watch occurred on weekends when all family members were home. Conflict usually arose between Anwar, who preferred Tamil language programs, and his sons, who enjoyed Hindi language programs on Doordarshan and Star TV. Anwar said he usually gave in to his sons' preferences since they got to watch so little of television.

Television in Padma, Saraswathi, and Kareema's homes therefore served as a

source of primarily entertainment and then for information. All these families felt excluded from the contexts of the serials and game shows they watched because they felt the actors in these programs were wealthy and intelligent, unlike themselves.

Viewing choices and control over channels provided a site for the expression of power among members in these families. Ganesan discussed his ability to watch and understand Hindi, English, and Kannada channels and Padma's inability to do so, as a factor of his role as breadwinner in the public sphere and Padma's role as mother and housewife in the domestic, private sphere. Anwar also emphasized his interest in news by contrasting it with Kareema's home-boundedness and lack of interest in the world outside her door. For Saraswathi, the television served as a symbol of her authority, and as a means by which she could control her son who increasingly subverted her authority in the home. Saraswathi's knowledge of Hindi (as a result of her work with air force families, many from North India), allowed her to switch to Hindi channels and thus prove her superiority in the household because her children didn't understand this language.

"Can I Relate Such Programs To My Everyday Life?"

Television-watching in middle income families was a collective activity as it was in the low income families. Language was a strong factor influencing viewing choices. These families placed much importance on the news and said they selected programs that were informative and educative over those that were just entertaining.

Shanti's (Christian) family watched English language programs on Star TV and Star Plus. However, the family had stopped watching prime-time serials on Star Plus

because, as Shifrah explained, these were now dubbed in Hindi, sacrificing their originality.

Shifrah enjoyed Channel [V] and MTV because she felt these channels best related to her as a teenager. Other channels were designed more for adults or very young children whereas these channels told her what styles of dressing and speaking were in fashion. Nithin said he watched the Discovery channel, Cartoon Network, Star Plus, and Star Sports most often. The family as a whole enjoyed cricket, tennis, and cartoons.

Shanti pointed out that although the children enjoyed cartoons and entertaining serials, she watched television because it is:

> something that gives me some information. I don't sit and watch these movies you know. I look at it from this point of view: Am I learning anything out of it? Like sometimes Oprah talks about child upbringing. If I can learn something out of it, yes, I sit and watch that. So when I switch on the television, when I see something, that is my first (thought): Am I getting anything out of it? Does it make sense? Can I relate such things in my everyday life?

Shanti disliked soaps such as "Santa Barbara" and "Bold and the Beautiful" because she felt the promiscuity and violence presented in these soaps could be a bad influence on her children. The family found Doordarshan's programming boring and preferred Star News to the news on Doordarshan because they felt the former provided a more accurate picture of the world rather than the pro-government stance projected by the latter.

While Shanti's family preferred English language programs on Star TV and found Doordarshan irrelevant and uninteresting, Janaki's family watched Doordarshan extensively. This was primarily because they didn't have a cable connection. However,

they could receive cable signals by adjusting their antenna. Janaki was adamant that the family not get a cable connection because she said Doordarshan provided adequate entertainment and education for the family and protected them from the corrupt influences of cable television.

In general, the family enjoyed the Hindu epics, "Mahabharatha" and "Sri Krishna," and the Kannada serials on DDMetro because these were family-oriented serials. Janaki watched television in the afternoons when her morning chores were done, and when her husband and children were away at work and school. She said television was a source of escape and she could forget all her tensions by watching serials and films.

Chandrashekharaiah was eager that the family get a cable connection because he couldn't understand Hindi and wanted to increase his viewing choices from the lengthy hours of Hindi programming on Doordarshan. As a government officer, he was pleased at the social service programs telecast on Doordarshan, but was critical of them because they lacked quality.

Janaki and Chandrashekaraiah's daughters, Megha, Shilpa and Deepa enjoyed cartoons such as "Tom and Jerry" and "Aladdin" on DD1. Deepa found the afternoon educational programs on Doordarshan sponsored by the University Grants Commission useful for her studies. Shilpa enjoyed prime time Hindi-language sitcoms in addition to the Hindi-dubbed cartoons on DD1. The family enjoyed "Surabhi" on Doordarshan on

Sundays.[58] Janaki and Chandrashekharaiah also watched the news and news programs such as "Aaj Tak" for current affairs. Chandrashekharaiah said it was very important to keep up with the political and economic affairs of the country. The family as a whole said they learned Hindi by watching Doordarshan, and were grateful for that opportunity to learn the national language though television.

Azeezunissa's family watched television extensively and preferred Hindi-language programs on Zee TV, El TV, and Star Plus. Munir Khan, a deeply religious man, preferred classical Hindi songs and devotional music. He said patriotic songs transported him to thoughts of the supremacy of the nation, and devotional songs immediately brought him into the presence of the gods. Munir Khan watched Quwalis and bhajans (religious songs) on either Doordarshan or Zee TV. Such songs were not regularly telecast, but were aired on Muslim holidays and described the life and miracles of the prophet Mohammed.

Azeezunissa and her daughters, Shabhana and Rubina, preferred the Hindi-language serials on Zee TV and Star Plus, and found such comedies as "Tu Tu Mein Mein" (which revolved around a mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship) ridiculous, yet hilarious. Jameel enjoyed car races and wrestling. Because he wasn't interested in serials and movies, he fought with other family members over what to watch. And since the majority won, he usually had to wait for repeat telecasts late at night. Like Jameel, Suhel and Shaqueel also watched Hindi and English-language movies on Zee TV and

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58 "Surabhi" may be considered the Indian version of the Discovery channel, except that it focuses more on innovations and lifestyles in different countries than on wildlife.

Star Plus, after they came home from work.

The family watched English programs because they felt it was a good way to improve their knowledge and fluency in the language. English-language programs were not a favorite, however, because they found it hard to understand British and American accents. This family also said television was an important feature in their lives. As Jameel put it, "You cannot live without television. If television is not there, you get bugged. You've got nothing to do, so if it is there, it will entertain you at least for one hour or two hours. It's a must. You've *got* to have it."

As did the women in the low income families, the women in the middle income families did a variety of activities such as grading papers and sewing while watching television. For the men in these families on the other hand, television watching was an isolated activity. These men, as did those in the low income group, said they preferred to watch television late at night after the rest of the family had gone to bed so they could watch their favorite programs undisturbed. It is worthy of note that late night programs on Star Plus usually include risque English movies -- a probable reason for the late-night television preference.

"Television is a Great Waste of Time"

English programs on Star TV were popular with most members of the higher income families. These families did not watch Doordarshan at all and felt the programs on the national network were poorly produced and packed with simplistic and redundant social messages.

Susan and John said their family was far from a traditional Indian family. Susan,

a native of Trinidad, had spent most of her life there. Her daughters Vidya and Lakshmi were born in Trinidad as well. Susan and her daughters had moved to India about 20 years ago. Susan and John had met in India and had been married for about ten years.

Susan enjoyed such American serials as "Charlie's Angels," "Mash," "I Dream of "Jeannie," and "Bewitched" because they reminded her of her home in Trinidad. She was annoyed that these serials were now dubbed in Hindi, a language she could not understand. Vidya and Lakshmi on the other hand, watched Hindi comedies such as "Tu Tu Mein Mein," and American dramas such as "Picket Fences" and "Chicago Hope" on Star Plus, and cartoons on the Cartoon Network. They said television served as a good source of entertainment. Such channels as CNN also helped them keep up with current affairs. John said he watched the news on CNN, BBC and Asianet regularly. His favorite channel was the Malayalam channel Asianet on which he could watch films, serials, and the news in his native language, about his native state.

With only one television set in the house, the family often had conflicts about what to watch. While Vidya and Lakshmi preferred Hindi serials or cartoons, Susan and John preferred English and Malayalam programs respectively. Although Susan said she rarely watched television anyway, she preferred Malayalam movies over Hindi and even some English ones because she felt Malayalam movies were more realistic and better produced. The family also had conflicts over sports shows -- while Susan enjoyed cricket, John didn't understand the game. The family as a whole, however, enjoyed watching tennis.

Although observation sessions showed that John watched television extensively,

he was adamant to point out during the family interview that television was a waste of time. He said:

> Basically, unless a television program is specifically focused on education, they (the viewers) don't gain any knowledge either (about) international law, physics, or chemistry...UGC and other things (educative programs on Doordarshan) are there, but they're basically for the secondary education -- it's a great waste of time especially for students -- a *great* waste of time.

He said television played no role in his life and that because he was past his formative years, he did not stand to gain or lose anything by watching television.

Favorite channels in Ruksana's family were again, Star Plus, Zee TV and MTV. Ruksana in particular enjoyed "The Oprah Show" and various Hindi and English-language quiz shows. She said:

> I *love* anything which is based on truth, you know, something which is informative and educative. This new thing that they have, this British Raj 'Hindustan ki Nazron Se,' I think it is one of the best. It's (about) Indian history. But we have always learned it from the British point of view. Because all the authors, the historians have been British. And this is putting the record straight.

For Kashvi and Karam, television was used primarily for entertainment. As did Susan's daughters, they enjoyed such American dramas as "Picket Fences," "Beverly Hills 90210," and "The X-Files." They found such channels as MTV and Channel [V] useful because, as Kashvi put it:

> It tells you about what -- about the generation we're in, and the stuff we're doing. And that's much more important. I mean if you walk into a class now, or you walk into a party now, I mean what are the chances you will be sitting and discussing Laloo Prasad Yadav's political career? What you're gonna talk about is listening to music, who's writing what, what's new; so if it's informative for where I am, I think it works for me.

Both Kashvi and Karam differentiated themselves from other children in their upper-class neighborhood and said they preferred only English (primarily American) programs and didn't care for Hindi or vernacular language programs. Both were self-conscious of their postcolonial and class identities and said the influence of the British in India still evident in their education system made them value and understand English-language programs better than vernacular, indigenously produced ones.

Lakshman on the other hand, enjoyed various Hindi serials and the news and said he and Ruksana rarely interfered in the children's television choices. Conflicts over what to watch rarely arose because the family had two television sets.

If Ruksana's family watched television extensively and Susan's family moderately, Sumedha's family watched television hardly at all. Apart from "Charles in Charge" at 5:30 p.m. on weekdays and a few serials between 8:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., the family hardly watched television. Sumedha said the children were rarely allowed to watch more than half an hour a day and two hours on weekends. She said:

> Well the reason the kids don't watch much TV is because we made a conscious decision when they were very young, that we will not be the kind of family where we watch TV and that would be the main thing in their lives. To a large extent -- we have demystified TV. There is no banning of TV. But at a fairly early age I made them responsible saying (if) you want to watch, you have to select something which will give you the maximum pleasure.

She and her husband Deepak, however, watched television more frequently depending on the program menu.

The family enjoyed the Discovery channel, and such British comedies as "Allo Allo" and "Black Adder." Kaveri in particular enjoyed automobile races. This family

disliked Hindi movies for all the songs and melodrama they contained.

While middle income families such as those of Janaki and Azeezunissa stated that they enjoyed such shows as "Tu Tu Mein Mein" on Star Plus and the "Zee Horror Show" on Zee TV, Kaveri and Lavanya found these shows ludicrous for their production flaws. For example, Kaveri said:

> The Zee Horror Show (laughs) -- it's supposed to be a horror show -- they have all these ghosts walking around, and skeletons dripping blood and all that sort of stuff, but it's obviously for people with less imagination. Or (for) people who have not watched *good*, scary films. I mean you imagine ghosts better than what they're showing you. I watched it thrice, but that's enough. I'm never going to watch it again, it's so *boring*. Or you laugh, like, three of us were watch(ing) it, two friends of mine and I, and we were sitting there, and we were even laughing at camera angles. We were like, see you could take this at a different angle, it could have been scarier.

Kaveri and Lavanya said their father's job as a creative advertising director had made them extra critical about the production quality of the programs they watched. Sumedha watched Sun TV occasionally because she understood the language and found some of the programs on this channel amusing. The family had lived in Bombay for several years before they moved to Bangalore in 1985. Hence Sumedha and Deepak knew Marathi, Hindi, Tamil, and Kannada, but spoke English with their daughters at home.

In summary, high income families preferred English-language serials on Star TV and found Doordarshan uninteresting, staid, and directed at lower-income groups. They said television played a minor role in their lives and discussed its effects as relevant to uncritical, average viewers, and not to critical, sophisticated viewers such as themselves. These families rarely had conflicts over what to watch because they either had multiple

television sets, or watched television at different times and not together as a family, as was evident in the lower and middle income families. While respondents in high and middle income families watched English or Hindi-language news on the international channels such as Star Plus, Zee TV or BBC, respondents in low income families preferred the local and national news on either the private regional or Bangalore Doordarshan channels. Besides differences in preferences based on income level, certain gendered patterns of viewing behavior emerged.

## Differentiated Viewers

### Viewing Style

In her ethnography of low income television audiences in New Delhi, Mankekar (1993) observed that men were the most ardent viewers of television. While women conducted household chores as they watched television, the men did nothing else and devoted all their attention to what they were watching.

In this study as well, the men in the low income families said they usually watched television late at night when the rest of the family was in bed. This allowed them undisturbed television time. During the evening hours as well, the men did little else besides sip tea or coffee while watching television. The women on the other hand, brought their cooking into the living room and cut vegetables and prepared the evening meal in front of the television set.

The isolated and combination television viewing by men and women respectively was also noted by Morley (1992) in his ethnography of Nationwide audiences. The reason for this difference, Morley writes, is because "the home is primarily defined for

men as the site of leisure -- in distinction from the 'industrial time' of their employment outside the home -- while the home is primarily defined for women as a sphere of work, whether or not they also work outside the home" (p. 146). Indeed, Padma, Saraswathi, and Kareema said they combined housework with leisure because they knew they could not afford to watch television and neglect their obligations to the family. It is interesting to note also, that the daughters in these families (Chitra in Padma's family and Maheshwari in Saraswathi's family) helped their mothers cook and cut vegetables while watching television as opposed to their brothers who, like their fathers, watched television without doing anything else.

Also, the women in the low income families, as did Janaki and Azeezunissa in the middle and Ruksana in the high income families respectively, said they enjoyed watching television in the afternoon when the house was quiet and the rest of the family was away at school or work. These women said they had so much housework to take care of in the mornings and evenings, that the afternoons provided the only time when they could relax from their chores in and outside the home.

### Guilt

Radway (1991) discusses in her survey of women reading romance, that the act of reading itself provided escape, relaxation, and assertion of independence for the women. She writes:

> As an activity, it (the reading) so engages their attention that it enables them to deny their physical presence in an environment associated with responsibilities that are acutely felt and occasionally experienced as too onerous to bear. Reading, in this sense, connotes a free space where they feel liberalized from the need to perform duties that they otherwise

> willingly accept as their own (p. 93).

Radway contrasts reading romance as an intensely private activity, with watching television, a social activity. Her discussion is relevant to this context because afternoon television *was* an intensely private activity for these women, conducted when the house was quiet and when they could spare a few hours from their housework.

Of these women, Janaki said she didn't watch more than an hour of television in the afternoons because she had a tremendous amount of housework to do everyday. Unlike Padma, Saraswathi, or Kareema who would settle down to two or three hours of afternoon movies or soaps, Janaki said she felt guilty if she neglected her housework for more than an hour. All these women said the soaps and films they watched were silly and frivolous. They defended their enjoyment of it by saying these programs helped them pass the time and forget the day's work.

Morley (1992) noticed this guilt and ridicule from watching soaps among many of his female respondents. He notes that "What is at issue here is the guilt that most of these women feel about their own pleasures. They are, on the whole, prepared to concede that the drama and soap opera they like is 'silly' or 'badly acted' or inconsequential. They accept the terms of a masculine hegemony which define their preferences as having low status" (p. 154).

Padma, Saraswathi, and Kareema's seeming lack of guilt at their afternoon pleasure may be attributed to the specific contexts that defined their individual positions. Padma as the primary breadwinner said she felt entitled to her relaxation. Saraswathi did not have a male authoritative figure in the house to dictate what she did. She often

adopted a "why bother" attitude when faced with resistance from her children, and like Padma, said she deserved her afternoon television. Finally, in Kareema's house, Anwar enjoyed soaps as much as she did (although he dismissed them as "silly" and "stupid") and the two watched the afternoon soaps together.

Similarly, although observation sessions showed that Susan's husband John watched fictional television (for example, Malayalam films and serials) extensively, he was reluctant to admit it. He insisted television was a great waste of time and he watched only the news on BBC, Doordarshan, or Star TV. Morley (1992) states that "the claims many of the male respondents make about only watching 'factual' television are a misrepresentation of their actual behavior, based on their anxiety about admitting to watching fictional programmes" (p. 152). The women in the middle and high income families, as did the men in all the families, adopted this hegemonic valuation of facts as "superior male preference" and soaps as "inferior female preference" and said they also preferred factual programs on television. The respondents' general response that television was primarily used for entertainment and "time pass" and that unless they specifically sought news or education programs, it was a "waste of time," finds resonance in Morley's (1992) observation that audiences rely on socially constructed interpretive frameworks rather than their own perceptions to explain their media behavior.

Apart from differences in viewing style and perceptions about the ritual of watching, viewing behavior in these families revealed structures of patriarchy and resistance, as discussed in the next section.

## Patriarchal Definitions of Nation and Family

As explained in Chapter 5, the director and executive producer in Bangalore Doordarshan described India as a unified entity. They discussed the network's move to increased commercialization as a strategy of the nation itself to combat the capitalistic interests of the private channels. This protectionist rhetoric found resonance in the attitudes of most of the men in this study. These men saw it important to regulate or at least criticize the type and duration of television programs watched by the females in their families. Using Foucault's (1976) analysis that macro institutions of power are reflections of structures of power existing at micro levels, we can say that the articulation of nation at the institutional level as a coherent whole requiring protection, has relevance for expressions of patriarchal power at the familial level.

Commenting on British influence in colonial India, Chatterjee's (1993) writes that anticolonial nationalism divides social institutions and practices into the material and spiritual spheres. The material sphere is the external domain which encompasses the science, technology and economy of the state. It is in this domain that the West has established its superiority over the East. On the other hand, the spiritual domain is considered a sovereign territory that seals itself from colonial power. However, Chatterjee's analysis is limited in the context of television. Although the nationalist elites could perhaps limit the influence of colonialism to the public, material sphere during the British rule in India, television influence in the age of globalization is far more pervasive.

Thompson's (1990) analysis of the "mediazation of culture" deals with the ability

of mass communication to cross the lines between the private and the public. Through television, public events enter the private space of a home. He writes, "the nature of what is public and what is private and the demarcation between these domains, are transformed in certain ways by the development of mass communication, and this in turn has implications for the ways in which political power, at the level of state institutions is acquired, exercised and sustained in modern societies" (p. 238). As private events are made public and public events are brought into private settings, audiences are exposed to codes of behavior they would not ordinarily encounter in their daily lives. This may be beneficial in that audiences are able to experience and feel connected to people and events across the globe. However, the capacity of the mass media is problematic for those in power, be they in the private or public domain, to continue to govern the use and access of information.

The conflation of nation with family works to legitimate the government's legal control over the images on Doordarshan, and, at the same time, perpetuate gender hierarchies within the household. The perspectives of Doordarshan officials that the network is the protector of the (female) nation[59] was echoed in audience homes -- as for

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Speaking about modernist movements in the Middle East at the turn of this century, Kandiyoti (1994) says that nationalist movements that seek to protect the nation state from foreign invasions, at the same time "reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse. Feminism is not autonomous, but bound to the signifying networks of the national context which produces it" (p. 380). Women, as carriers of the nation (Derne 1995; Chakravarti 1995; Sangari and Vaid 1989) reproduce national boundaries, and can, at the same time, blur them. In India, a woman's sexual conduct and her choice of husband are subject to regulation by the heads of the household.

example, in those of Kareema's, Janaki's and Susan's homes.

The men in these families were concerned that their wives and daughters were watching too much fictional television and were not interested in news or other "important" factual affairs on television. Anwar's ridicule of Kareema's interest in soaps further defined her role as cook and housekeeper who had no interest in external affairs and who preferred such low-value fare as soap operas. Any interest she may have had in news was discussed as an anomaly, making her comfortable to continue her role as wife and mother and soap-opera watcher in the private sphere. Chandrashekaraiah worried that his daughters might be influenced by the sex and violence on television. John took this concern to an extreme and stressed his daughters wasted too much time watching frivolous shows on television. His own enjoyment of Malayalam and English movies, many with risque and lewd depictions of women, he said, was above comment because he was beyond his formative years and was a critical and mature adult. The patriarchal protectionist rhetoric of the officials at Doordarshan therefore, was echoed in these families as well.

It may seem contradictory that the men in these same families preferred private channels to Doordarshan. On closer analysis, this contradiction disappears because preference for private television may be explained, in the respondents' own terms, by the better production quality of private television programs. However, the interpretive frameworks of patriarchy and of religious and class hierarchies do not disappear in the preference of private television, but are used to interpret programs on these channels as well. Anwar, Chandrashekaraiah, and John -- to use the same examples -- welcomed the

increased viewing choices, yet balanced this preference by regulating or at least commenting and criticizing the viewing habits of the female members of their respective families to sustain their positions of power in the private sphere. The women in these families found the multiplicity of channels empowering and sought various alternatives such as different viewing times, argument with the men, or even ridicule of the latter's comments to resist control over their television watching.

Interestingly, all respondents associated knowledge of other languages and interest in national and international affairs with power, modernity, and superiority. For example, while Padma smiled apologetically and said she understood only Tamil, she said almost immediately that she enjoyed the news; Kareema said self-depreciatingly that she knew only Hindi and hated the news because it was boring; finally, Saraswathi said although her family disliked the news, she enjoyed Hindi programs because she knew this national language in addition to Tamil and Kannada.

The association of power with knowledge of different languages and interest in worldly affairs is important to note as we move toward an understanding of whether these competing television networks may sustain or fragment the nation in the long term. This is because knowledge of languages and interest in the news allow the imaginings of communities that are articulated beyond state or national boundaries. It remains to be seen whether such avenues to empowerment through participation in communities beyond local or national boundaries, are indeed taken by viewers, to subvert or establish power and authority in their private realms.

# CHAPTER VIII

# AUDIENCE INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN TELEVISION NARRATIVES

This chapter provides an analysis of audiences' perceptions of their inclusion or exclusion in the narratives of the television programs they watched most frequently. I am specifically interested in whether audiences felt they could identify with the characters and contexts on television, and whether they felt they were the implied viewers of the programs. Throughout my analysis, I pay special attention to each respondent's class, religion, and gender identities, and their influence on the respondent's perception of his or her inclusion or exclusion in television narratives.

Morley (1992) writes:

> When watching television programmes, the individual viewer confronts a set of signs which have been organized and structured by professional broadcasters in such a way as to 'prefer' a particular reading, or range of readings. However, the individual viewer does not come to the moment of viewing 'culturally naked' -- he comes to the text carrying already, and thinking within, his own set of cultural codes and frameworks -- derived from his social and cultural situation and background. In the moment of viewing, the codes and structure of the programme meet and have to be filtered through the codes and discourses at the viewer's disposal (p. 94).

Important questions to keep in mind during audience analysis, Morley writes, are:

> Do audiences use the same words in the same way as broadcasters when

> talking about aspects of the topic? Do respondents rank these aspects in the same order of priority as the broadcasters? Are there aspects of the topic not discussed by broadcasters which are specifically mentioned by respondents? (p. 94).

These are indeed pertinent questions and echo those posed in this study to examine the correspondence between production and consumption of television in Bangalore. As stated in earlier chapters, I am particularly interested in links between narratives of nation and community between respondents at the television networks and audiences at home. Thus during observation sessions and family interviews with audiences, I paid special attention to their constructions of target audiences for each network, and of themselves as audiences for these networks.

What was clear in the responses of all viewers in this study was that each realized his or her place in the class, religious, and gender hierarchies that defined his or her context. The lower income families said they could identify with some of the problems of the characters, but not the middle-class, comfortable lifestyles portrayed on regional television networks. The middle-class families who watched Doordarshan and the Hindi and English-language foreign networks, said they could identify with the lifestyles of the characters on television, but not the problems of unemployment, promiscuity, and poverty that the characters were involved in. The high income families watched primarily the Hindi and English-language foreign channels again, but said they could identify more with the English-language programs set in western contexts than they could with the Indian language ones set in urban Indian contexts. This was because of their internationality in terms of knowledge and exposure to western countries and

cultures.

## Communities of Language

As discussed earlier, Padma and Ganesan primarily watched Sun TV. Observation sessions in this house showed that both Padma and Ganesan and their neighbors enjoyed a high level of participation with the serial or film narratives they were watching. They commented to each other about the foolishness of the actors on the screen and often shouted out instructions to the actors to warn them of dangers ahead. Padma said after each program, they chatted about how the story could be better or worse if the fate of the characters was different or if the story line was altered.

Both Padma and Ganesan said they could identify with some of the stories depicted in Tamil films. Ganesan, in particular, said he could relate to male characters who were unemployed and who worried about providing for their families. Padma said the serials on Sun TV portrayed working class characters with such problems as unemployment, poverty, and hunger. She felt comforted to know there were others dealing with similar problems and could empathize with the characters on television because, she said, "we are going through the same things they are going through."

Despite their identification with the existential problems of the families represented in Sun TV serials, Padma said she was aware these programs dealt primarily with Hindu families. However, the scant representation of religious minorities on television did not bother her because she knew she lived in a Hindu country. Besides, her faith had taught her to be tolerant of all religions and she firmly believed religion and prayer were private issues. In fact, she preferred to pray in private when none of her

family was home, rather than watch a Christian program on television with all the neighbors.

Ultimately, both Padma and Ganesan said of all the cable channels, Sun TV knew its audience best and hence telecast popular films, film songs, and witty comedies and game shows, unlike other channels which provided hours of films or unimaginative documentaries and serials. Padma said Sun TV producers obviously knew they were catering to viewers who would not be able to afford to go to the cinema. Thus, as a Sun TV viewer, she said, "we who cannot go (to the cinema) can say boldly, 'They will show it on Sun TV!' and sure enough, they do. Why should we go to the theater?"

Thus, viewers in this family felt strongly they were a part of the Sun TV viewing community and could participate in the stories of the actors in their favorite dramas and sitcoms vicariously. The language and the resonance in context allowed them to feel the producers had a keen sense of who they were and were thus catering to them adequately. However, they also felt that television played a minor role in their lives, and their membership in their local communities defined who they were.

Padma said although she learned about the political affairs of the nation and of Tamil Nadu on the Sun TV news, she felt rooted in her own local community in the air force servants' quarters. The family didn't socialize too much with the families of other maids in the colony, but maintained close ties with their families in the nearby Ulsoor neighborhood and in Kolar. Both Padma and Ganesan said their identities were defined by their role in the house as mother and father respectively, and then by their work as maid and autorickshaw driver, respectively. They were deeply involved in the affairs of

their family and in the lives of their employers. Affairs of the nation and world were interesting to learn about, but they felt clearly they were merely spectators and could never even hope to be a part of these national and international spheres.

In Saraswathi's family, both Saraswathi and Ramesh said they watched television for entertainment to pass the time. They knew television wasn't real and hence forgot about the contexts and stories of the programs they watched soon after they were telecast. They disliked the news and were uninterested in local, national, or international affairs. Saraswathi said she had enough to worry about at home with an ailing husband and a disrespectful son. Ramesh said he was just concerned about his work and the films he could watch on television. News of the nation, state, or world, was irrelevant and uninteresting to him.

Both Saraswathi and Ramesh said the stories portrayed on television dealt with middle and upper class actors, and this was necessary so that people like them could enjoy the affairs of these actors vicariously. They said they would be bored if they were to watch a story about a family as poor as theirs.

Maheshwari however, was perturbed by the question on whether or not she could identify with characters on television. After a thoughtful silence, she said she and her friends at school talked much about the programs on television. She had thought about programming on television and said, "They put only shows about rich people, but not about people like us. I would put (produce) a story about people like us, not about rich people."

Saraswathi laughed at her daughter's remark and said although a few serials on

Sun TV portrayed stories similar to their own, this was not an issue of concern. She said, "Because Maheshwari goes to school, her lessons do some work in her brain and make her think like this."

Maheshwari, as a practicing Catholic, also felt excluded from the narratives of the program she watched on Udaya TV and Sun TV. Although Saraswathi was a Hindu, Ramesh and Maheshwari attended Sunday mass at the local Catholic Church and went to weekly Christian prayer meetings held at a neighbor's house. Ramesh said he didn't go to any Hindu temple, yet went to the church because he enjoyed participating and listening to the stories of Christ. Maheshwari said she also believed in Christ, but while Ramesh said he had a little faith in the Hindu gods, Maheshwari said she didn't believe in them at all. She wished there were more Christian programs on television, but was happy with the occasional telecast of Christian prayers and songs on Sunday mornings.

Kareema's family also felt television connected them to other families in similar contexts. Anwar said no family was the same: the differing stories and differing serials enabled him to identify with characters and contexts at particular moments and particular times in their respective narratives. However, members of this family clearly felt that as Muslims, and as minorities in the country, they hardly had an opportunity to watch a family situation similar to theirs. Commenting about Doordarshan programming, Anwar explained:

> Since we are in India, Hindu stories are important to us. Christian stories and Muslim stories are there, but we live in India, we live in Hindustan. That's why Hindu for us, is *main* (in English). That's why all the programs are about Hindus. That's what we watch and like. We are not bothered by the lack of our (Muslim-oriented) programs. When our

festivals come around, they put on Muslim serials and Muslim songs.

Anwar repeated this point several times to make sure I understood he wasn't complaining, but was very conscious and comfortable with his place as a religious minority in the country. This sentiment was echoed in the Christian and Muslim middle-class families as well, as we shall see in the next section.

To summarize, the low income families said television provided them adequate news and entertainment. To differing degrees, they said religious and economic minorities were not given adequate representation, yet said this was a natural outcome of the hierarchical structure of the nation which upheld the Hindu majority, and catered to the middle and upper classes. They were not frustrated with their minority positions, but accepted their place in the nation's hierarchy.

## Communities of Religion

The middle income families also expressed a clear understanding of their religious identities and their place in the narratives of television. The Christian and Muslim families in this group enjoyed television as a medium of entertainment, but said they were excluded from its Hindu-oriented programming. These criticisms were specifically directed at Doordarshan and not the private cable channels. These families felt, however, they were the implied viewers of programs on such private channels as Star TV and Zee TV rather than Doordarshan or the private regional language channels. Again, this was primarily a factor of language and quality of programming.

Shanti said her family did not watch Doordarshan not so much for its narratives of inclusion or exclusion, but because the programs themselves were poorly produced

and were uninteresting. They also said Doordarshan's programming clearly excluded them as Christians. The epics, "Chandrakanta," "Ramayana" and "Mahabharatha" were irrelevant because, as Shanti put it, "being Christians, we don't know much about those programs. We learn about it, but watching it is not fun; like we'll *want* to watch it."

Religion played an important role in the family's television viewing behavior. They didn't watch movies on Sundays (unless it was an exceptionally good movie), and in general didn't watch adult movies or horror shows. They actively practiced their Christian faith and therefore weren't superstitious (like the Hindus, as they said). They did not consider themselves traditionally Indian either and found the contexts of various serials on Doordarshan and the regional language channels alien to their own contexts. Their interest in western music and knowledge of western lifestyles and modes of dressing allowed them to enjoy western programming on Star TV and MTV.

In particular, Shanti said programs on Star TV such as "The Oprah Show" were relevant to her because they helped her learn more about such important issues as parenting and marital relationships. She was quick to point out that although themes on Oprah were sometimes relevant to her context, she and her family, and other middle class Christian families for that matter, were quite different from the promiscuous, uncaring guests on Oprah.

Shifrah said issues discussed on Oprah were becoming increasingly relevant to the Indian context because urban India was also witnessing the problems of divorce and single parenthood more common in western countries. However, Shanti objected to this equation of Indian urban society to that of western countries. She said:

> No, no -- we are not *that* open, and not that free also, like them. We do have some restrictions, and things which they discuss openly (incest, teenage pregnancies, etc.) -- I don't think we have started doing that. (Their) mother and daughter relationships, parents and children relationships, they are *very* sad -- they don't *have* (good relationships) you know. We give importance to our children and the husband and wife relationship is definitely much, much better here. There they talk so freely about three to four husbands -- they don't *bother*, and they talk without any remorse, as if -- I mean the *emotion* is not there. That -- *that* we can't accept. Here you have family and you are so attached to your husband and your children. There child and single mothers you find mostly. So those things we are not able to understand because we haven't gone through that experience and (we) don't also think like that.

Shifrah protested that such problems were becoming common in India as well, but her mother was adamant that these problems were particular to western contexts only. Shifrah said the western programs she watched on Channel [V] and MTV had greater relevance for her as a teenager than did those on Zee TV or Doordarshan. She explained:

> You can't say that everybody is proud to be an Indian nowadays. I would say that (for me) sometimes (I do), but usually that *josh* (enthusiasm) about being an Indian comes only during the cricket matches. Otherwise sometimes you feel like, it's a waste staying here.

Shanti seemed worried that her daughter was so quick to find relevance in foreign programming and reiterated that neither she nor her daughter would want to be an American, living "in *that* kind of culture. We feel proud about our culture," she said.

Through observation sessions and interviews in this family, it was obvious that these viewers enjoyed programs and news shows on Star TV, yet were ambiguous about its use for them. Although they felt a greater degree of participation in the narratives of English-language programs on this channel than in those of Doordarshan, and felt the

political and economic processes of the country were not areas to be proud of, they did not want to accept that they were members of a community articulated in a western context and comprising of western actors. Television allowed them therefore, to be a part of a community of empowered viewers, empowered both by the exposure to the problems, issues, and contexts of western society, and by the practice of their Indian identities through daily familial and religious rituals. Television allowed them to practice a hybrid identity where they could assess the best of both western and Indian contexts and execute them in their daily practices.

Azeezunissa's family also said the contexts of the serials on television were far removed from their own family contexts. Soaps on Doordarshan and Zee TV in particular, were amusing because of their frivolous, promiscuous, and incestuous characters. Shabhana said the family watched these soaps for entertainment only and knew there was a big difference between what went on on television and what happened in everyday life. The family said the lack of Muslim programs on television was merely symbolic of the minority status of Muslims in the country.

However, Munir Khan who would launch into lengthy monologues about religion and patriotism, said he didn't think of himself as a minority. He said, "Irrespective of caste and creed, he (an individual) is an Indian first." Although India is a country of various languages and religions, it is not a land of conflict. Various religious festivals were celebrated simultaneously and people lived in communal harmony. Division in communities, he said, was created by politicians.

Despite Munir Khan's claims that the family watched programs based on quality

rather than language or religion, other family members said they felt excluded from regional language channels and thus watched only the Hindi channels because that was the only language, besides English and Urdu, they understood.

Besides Munir Khan, this family was sharp in its criticism of Doordarshan. Shabhana said cable television programs were directed at people's entertainment needs rather than their development or educational needs as were Doordarshan's programs. Besides, she felt, Doordarshan catered to the upper middle class, while cable catered to people of all classes and all religions. Also, while Doordarshan portrayed women as subordinate to men, private cable channels portrayed women as progressive and equal to men. Shabhana and Rubina said their parents and brothers treated them with respect and gave their opinions much importance. Hence, they found Doordarshan's narratives restrictive and old-fashioned.

The family said Doordarshan rarely showed programs that dealt with Muslims or Christians. As Shabhana put it, "We know we are a minority in this country; we don't have any say. Everywhere you *go* you have (Hindus). So I don't feel we have any say."

Azeezunissa said besides all the reasons discussed for disliking Doordarshan's programming, she preferred such cable channels as Zee TV and EL TV, because the Hindi language serials and soaps on these channels were invariably situated in Dubai or some other Gulf country. She considered the smart, affluent settings of these programs a refreshing break from the slums and poverty she encountered everyday on her way to work. She said:

> India is so poor, but I have completed a nation-wide tour and a world tour

> because I saw it all on television. I went to the cricket match, I went to the National Games, all on television.

Both Shabhana and Rubina reiterated this and said television allowed them to feel they were part of a larger global community where people drove expensive cars down clean streets, and had glamorous clothes to wear and delicious foods to eat. Although Shabhana worried that her students at school neglected their homework because they were preoccupied with imitating the styles of dressing and speaking of their favorite television actors, Rubina said television helped her learn how to dress and speak fashionably as well. Jameel and his brothers however, said television provided them entertainment and not much more.

While Shanti and Azeezunissa's families said they were excluded from Doordarshan's programming based on their status as religious minorities in the country, Janaki's family said Doordarshan's programming contained a North Indian bias. Chandrashekharaiah said:

> North India and South India are totally different We feel sometimes they (Doordarshan) are *imposing* this Hindi language because I personally, I do not know Hindi. Of course they (other people) may be understanding Hindi, (laughs) but I'm basically from a rural background. So that's why I feel this is almost an imposition on southerners. So in fact when I was a student in 1969, we agitated against this imposition of this Hindi -- when I was in high school. So that's where I also -- even now -- that idea persists. I sometimes understand important things, because I pick up a few words. Otherwise I (ask) the children.

Chandrashekharaiah said that just for the sake of national identity and integration, Hindi should not be imposed and integration should not be forced on the people. Just as children resist doing whatever is imposed on them, the average Indian

will resist forced initiatives of national integration, he said. However, he pointed out that although he resisted the imposition of Hindi in the school curricula in the 1970s, his children now accepted Hindi as the primary language of television, and had learned it without resistance. Thus, he said, over time, the strategy of a common language for national integration would work. Apart from these strategies however, he said patriotism was something that was inherent in people that television couldn't detract from or add to.

This family wished Doordarshan provided more hours of regional Kannada language programming. Janaki said:

> In Tamil Nadu, other than the news, all other programs are in Tamil. When Doordarshan does that for Tamil Nadu, in our Karnataka, (except) for three to four hours, they give only Hindi programs, and we do wish they gave us more Kannada programming. We only get a few hours from 4:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Kannada programming on DD2. If we had only the national network, even that would be cut by one or two hours and we wouldn't get even the programs we are getting now. If they extend the slot (for Kannada programs) by one or two hours, Kannada viewers would be happy. That loyalty to (our) mother tongue will make (us) happy.

Chandrashekharaiah said news on television helped him feel he was part of a larger community of Indians. He said current news, especially election results, made him feel thrilled because he could feel he could participate in the political processes of the country as they were happening. Chandrashekharaiah said television would be useful if it increased its programs on rural development. Both Janaki and Chandrashekharaiah said a half-hour "Krishi Darshan" program (on farming) was not enough. They said more television sets should be set up in rural areas and the rural masses should be shown techniques of farming, health care, and domestic sanitation for three to four hours

everyday. They echoed the directives of respondents at the Bangalore Doordarshan, and saw Doordarshan as an educator of rural audiences.

Janaki said Doordarshan programming was directed to families like hers because it had the development of children and the welfare of the community in mind. DD1 carried educative programs during her children's examinations and taught them effective studying strategies. Deepa reiterated this point and said she found the afternoon educational programs relevant for her studies. However, she said it was difficult for her to feel drawn into any narrative on television because there were hardly any programs for teenagers. As Shifrah did in Shanti's family, Deepa said the national network directed its programming either at urban adults, very young children, or the rural masses in general. While Shifrah turned to MTV and Channel [V] which she said catered to her tastes in music and fashion, Deepa, who didn't have cable, said she often preferred reading to watching television because of its lack of relevance for her.

Shilpa and Megha enjoyed cartoons on Doordarshan. They both said they spent most of the evenings doing their homework, but were happy they could watch cartoons as soon as they came home from school. Their knowledge of Hindi allowed them to enjoy these Hindi-dubbed versions.

Megha said while she enjoyed Doordarshan programs, some programs on cable scared her. She often thought the situations presented in the Zee Horror Show were real. Chandrashekaraiah pointed out that just recently a newspaper story related that a little boy had tried to imitate an actor on the Zee Horror Show who had hanged himself. The boy, who was playing with his friends, had stood on a stool and had made a noose for

himself from the ceiling fan in his living room. Unfortunately, the stool slipped and the boy died instantly. Chandrashekaraiah worried that children Megha's age would not be able to understand the difference between fantasy and reality and imitate the violence on television.

Megha also said she was uncomfortable with the way women were portrayed on the Zee channel. She said: "Sometimes they (actresses in films) wear only half of their frock; they wear only this much (pointing to her stomach) so I feel bad."

Shilpa said she too thought the Zee Horror Show was unduly scary and that cable channels in general, depicted scantily dressed women. Megha and Shilpa's criticisms of cable television were interesting to note because the family did not have a cable connection and could occasionally receive signals by adjusting the antenna. They echoed their parents' strong opinions against private cable channels, and although they said they found Doordarshan boring and wanted a cable connection, discussed Doordarshan as a desirable channel and cable as an unnecessary evil. By sticking to just Doordarshan, this family said it was safe from the corruptive influence of crime and vulgarity on the cable channels. At the same time, through Doordarshan programs, they could keep up with news and current affairs of the nation and participate in the political and development processes of its people.

Ultimately, Janaki said, "Television has some good points and some bad points. But since we have Doordarshan, we are totally benefitting. For learning children (television) is a problem, but otherwise, in general, it is good."

Thus, the middle class families said the private cable channels provided

alternatives to the North Indian, Hindi-language, middle and upper middle class biases of Doordarshan. However, while the Muslim and Christian families actively sought other channels to fulfill their entertainment, information, and religious needs, the Hindu family said Doordarshan was sufficient for these needs.

## Communities of Class

While the low income families discussed language as a primary criteria for their viewing choices and the middle income families discussed language and religion as factors that influenced the channels and programs they watched, the high income families discussed their viewing preferences based on class. These families said Doordarshan and regional language channels were directed at the lower and middle income audiences. Religion did not play an important role in defining what most members of these families watched. In general, audiences in this category said they did not believe in any one religion and subscribed to such universal concepts as peace and communality, and did not allow the principles of any specific religion to dictate what and how they watched television.

Susan's family did not watch Doordarshan at all because, as Susan put it, "I don't think they take the viewer's choice into consideration...I suppose the lower middle class people can enjoy that better. *Lower* middle class." Her emphasis on the type of audience targeted for Doordarshan programming indicated that she certainly did not see herself, an urban, wealthy woman, as the recipient of Doordarshan's messages.

Vidya and Lakshmi also emphatically declared they too could not identify with any program on Doordarshan. They said the national network's portrayal of such

problems as bride burning and women's health were rural issues and had no relevance for urban residents who would learn much more from programs on marital relationships and parenting. Lakshmi said Doordarshan definitely did not cater to educated audiences as herself, but to the larger rural masses.

John emphasized that Doordarshan's overt emphasis on the rural masses made its programming irrelevant and uninteresting to them. He pointed out at the beginning of the interview that the family was an upper-class, educated one. John felt it necessary to explain the location of the television set in the living room was a temporary one because:

> If the television is in the living room, obviously, you belong to a middle-class Indian family, or a lower middle-class family. A high class Indian family will never have the television in the living room, generally, except as a show piece. But they watch their television in a different place, so at least for that reason I would like to shift the television out of the living room.

He said only middle and lower middle-class people watched television extensively and thus was very critical of his daughters who watched up to six hours of television a day on the weekends. He explained his own viewing of Malayalam movies during observation sessions was an anomaly, and he watched television only for the news. He said television was detrimental to the mental health of the general masses and often monopolized the family interview with lengthy commentary on the degenerative track taken by Indian society in general as a result of the debased programming on television. John's monologues are interpreted here as an assertion of patriarchy in the household. Susan, Lakshmi and Vidya, however, laughed at most of his comments and subverted his authority by presenting their own points of view, attacking his opinions, or

ignoring him completely.

Susan watched television for such American shows as "Charlie's Angels," "I Dream of Jeannie," and "Bewitched" because they reminded her of her home in Trinidad. She said:

> I prefer an American film because I can identify better with them (the characters). I feel that I can understand what they are talking about, what they're doing, much better than an English (British) film. Anything that reminds me (of home) -- I used to see "Charlie's Angels" in Trinidad...and we used to all very much enjoy that. So now when I see it here, I feel good about it....Things like that remind me of home, basically maybe because I'm homesick so anything I get I just grab at it -- it reminds me of home.

She particularly enjoyed the travel programs on Star Plus because they often showed clips of tourism in the Caribbean. Just as Susan watched American serials to renew her connections to Trinidad, John enjoyed Malayalam movies, news and serials on Asianet to retain his contact with his native state. Vidya and Lakshmi, however, seemed perturbed by the question. Although they were Trinidadian by birth, they had been brought up in India and said their tastes in television programs reflected this upbringing. They enjoyed Hindi films and serials and watched CNN, BBC, and Travel Plus programs on Star TV for general knowledge.

Vidya and Lakshmi preferred Hindi films and serials set in urban contexts because that was the context they were a part of. Religion did not influence viewing choices and the family felt their affluence allowed them a lifestyle that was neither very traditional nor liberal, and that allowed them to travel and be a part of the international and urban contexts they watched on television.

In Ruksana's family as well, television performed a different role for different members. Ruksana, who had become deeply religious, watched television for the serials on Muslim history and on the history of partition between Pakistan and India -- a context in which she had been brought up. She said:

> It (the program) need not be only (about) Pakistanis, it could be just about Muslims in general. That kind of thing I really do identify with. I identify with the language, I identify with the dress and I really *know* the characters, I really know oh okay, this is *it*, this is as real as it gets.

For Karam and Kashvi, English language programs on Star TV and western music videos on MTV allowed them to feel they were part of a global community of teenagers. They were disgusted that Star TV was Indianizing its programming. This Indianization, they said, excluded them as viewers, just as they were excluded from regional language channels and from Doordarshan because of their emphasis on Indian themes and languages. Commenting on this, Karam said:

> Star television -- they started out with very nice English channels, but got poor viewership (ratings), so they made it Hindi. That's really stupid. Why didn't (they) leave (it alone) -- there is not one channel except maybe BBC, which is not in the least bit Hindified or something. There is nothing, not *one* channel broadcast here which, if it originates from the US, is just totally US. Not even *one* channel. Even look at MTV -- some of their VJs themselves are Indian. So why, *why* shouldn't they just leave it?

Kashvi wanted me to understand that both her and her brother's preference for American programming in the English language was not because they were trying to imitate westerners, but because they were brought up to speak English and learn English literature and western cultures. Kashvi said:

> Everyone's got this concept that you know, we do this because we're

> snobs and we're westernized and all that, but that's absolute bullshit because see, we're educated in English, we've been taught to read great English literature, we've been brought up to think like them, and when we don't watch Zee TV and all that, they're like, you are trying to be a westerner...you are trying to be an American, you're not. *Crap*. Look they've been feeding us with that all over -- we read English newspapers, we read English literature. We do Shakespeare and we do Charles Dickens (so) obviously you're going to watch that (English-language programs).

Although Ruksana was a staunch Muslim and Lakshman was a Hindu, Kashvi and Karam resisted any religion as is evident in the following exchange:

> Karam: I think to hell with religion. I get damn irritated if somebody asks me what religion I am. That's stupid.
>
> Kashvi: I think for a long time I felt the same way, and then I've come to the conclusion that as people who are so imperfect, we all need this thing to hold on to. It's a very weird barter system -- I'll do this and you do this. I think religion was the earliest form of therapy. I think that's basically it. I don't think there's anything beyond that. I think everything happens because -- it's like billiard balls you know -- because of a series of events, this is what happens. Because we are from a mixed marriage, we've gone through life having people ask us: "Are you a Hindu? Are you a Muslim?" At least now when we're older, it's a little better.
>
> Karam: I think we're free to do anything we want. But the only thing is my mom is a Muslim, so she wants us to read the Quran. That is 'cos basically she thinks it's her duty. But I think we're relatively free to choose what we want to do, I mean. I don't think they have any problems with me accepting no God.

With no deep roots in any religion, and with an upbringing they felt was a hybrid of western and Indian lifestyles, they felt excluded from the narratives of both western and Indian programming. Kashvi said:

> We're *excluded*. You know both of us are in funny positions -- we're not included in the western stuff totally, and we're not included in the Hindi stuff -- we're sort of suspended in between the two of them. It's a little bit of this and a little bit of that kind of thing.

American serials on Star TV and music videos on MTV, they said, although not pertinent to their immediate contexts, conveyed to them a freedom of expression that was not presented in the programming of Doordarshan or regional language channels.

When discussing programs on Doordarshan, this family, as did Susan's family, talked in the third person, and discussed that the rural masses were most likely to be duped by the nationalistic narratives on the national network.

In this family therefore, Lakshman enjoyed Hindi serials and movies for entertainment, while Ruksana enjoyed historical documentaries about Indian independence and Muslim culture because they transported her to memories of her childhood and upbringing. She felt she could get in touch with her roots through these serials. For Kashvi and Karam who were painfully aware of their postcolonial positions as urban neither traditionally Indian nor western teen-agers, MTV and Star Plus were obvious choices. Programs on these channels allowed them to continue their interests in western music, clothes, and ways of life. They were defensive about their choice of these channels and said it was a result of their education in American schools rather than a desire to imitate western teen-age lifestyles.

This international, hybrid lifestyle was emphasized in Sumedha's family as well. As Sumedha put it:

> People like us, who have a fairly international lifestyle whether we are living in India or not, you could actually lift us up and put us anywhere in the world and we *would* more or less, be living the same way. Income may differ and the kind of stuff we have in the house might differ because it's available, that's all.

Sumedha and Deepak had carefully chosen names for their daughters that they felt would easily be pronounced anywhere in the world. They enjoyed English serials because they were all educated in English-medium schools and universities and spoke English at home. Kaveri and Lavanya said they could identify with the contexts on such sitcoms as "Charles In Charge" rather than those such as "Tu Tu Mein Mein" on Star TV because the latter dealt with typically Indian joint-family problems such as in-law squabbles -- issues that were alien to their family. Sumedha said:

> We watched one small bit of (Tu Tu Mein Mein) where this mother-in-law was handcuffed to the daughter-in-law. Now I don't know how that came about, okay. But I still think that the story is *absurd.* I think an American serial like "Charles in Charge" is more you know, the kind of life that we lead, than somebody getting handcuffed -- (laughs) I mean, its so *so* stupid!

Commenting on the relevance of "Charles in Charge" for her, Kaveri said:

> (In) last time's "Charles in Charge," he had to make a decision, and it was a very important decision. He had to choose his majors which he was going to take in his college. (He had to decide) whether to drop out of college, or to take a college major. And it was how he is trying to take the decision and all his family help him. But he doesn't want a lot of help obviously, so they are all doing it like, hiding -- all this sly type of thing. So Mama and Papa do that very often. If I have a problem, and I need it solved, if I don't go to them for help, they help me very subtly. So I could understand that (Charles') position. It was something I could identify with.

Sumedha said the family still carried on such Indian behaviors as eating food with their hands, and celebrating such Indian festivals as Diwali. However, they lived a fluid lifestyle and enjoyed western literature, movies, and celebrated Christian festivals such as Christmas as well. As in Susan's family, religion did not influence viewing choices in Sumedha's family.

Kaveri and Lavanya also studied in an international school as did Kashvi and Karam, and, as did the latter, said they did not believe in God. As did Kashvi and Karam, Kaveri and Lavanya discussed their dislike at being labeled as belonging to any one religious group and resisted being labeled Indian as well because they were disgusted with the political processes in the country. Sumedha said television played a strong role in shattering cultural values and traditions. Kaveri agreed:

> Some part of the programs are made to promote patriotism and all that. Personally I don't really understand what they mean by patriotism if patriotism means going out and killing other human beings. I'm not going to say I'm Indian. I definitely won't say I'm Hindu. They may ask me -- are you Indian or Japanese or something like that, then I may answer I'm Indian. But India -- it's not -- it's my country, I know it, I love it. Other than that, it's not the only place in the world for me.

In this family, therefore, watching television was a conscious decision and a disciplined activity. The family said their international character allowed them to identity more with western serials rather than Indian ones.

From this description of respondents' perceptions of television, it is obvious that language, religion, and class played important roles in determining the level to which they felt included or excluded in television narratives. There was also a remarkable similarity in articulations of network and audience identity between respondents at the television networks and those of audiences.

## Resisting Doordarshan, Embracing Private Television

With the exception of Janaki's family, all other families in this study said they preferred the private regional or international channels over Doordarshan. Viewers said the poor production quality and the boring development themes of Doordarshan failed to

attract their interest. It seemed pointless to watch such programming especially when they had so many other more interesting channels to choose from. Apart from preference for private channels because of high quality of programming, viewers said they were drawn to these channels because of the greater relevance to their own contexts.

As discussed in Chapter 5, respondents at Bangalore Doordarshan said the network targeted the rural viewer as its primary audience. News and prime time serials, they said, were designed for the education of rural residents. Correspondingly, the viewers in this study said Doordarshan's programming was directed to the low income, rural residents and had no relevance for them. Also, the low income viewers stated that Doordarshan's programming was not suited for them as urban residents. Its extensive use of the Hindi language made most of its programs incomprehensible to them (except for Kareema's family and Saraswathi who knew Hindi).

Employees at the Bangalore Doordarshan said the network was the voice of the government and propagated the government's point of view in domestic and international affairs. As discussed in Chapter 3, Doordarshan, with its extensive menu of epics, dramas, educational and informational programs, has been criticized for projecting either commercial interests or the government's social objectives (Chatterji, 1990). Prime time programs are criticized for being Delhi-centric, and for reinforcing the state as the seat of central power and of North Indian Hindu supremacy (Karnik, 1989). Even programs meant for education have been critiqued for their Hindu upper middle-class bias (Mitra, 1993; Krishnan and Dighe, 1992; McMillin, 1997). Mitra (1993) writes that broadcast of the Hindu epics "Ramayana" and "Mahabharatha" were

strategies in (Hindu) community building and reinforced the notion of *bharat* as:

> an imagined Hindu nation. ... Moreover, it provided, in the narratives, the central Hindu figures around which discourses developed, thus reimagining India as *bharat* -- the Hindu state. Within the popular culture, the notion of a Hindu state -- *a Hindutva* -- is now dominant. It is articulated with being Indian, as well as being progressive. The question of religion is now articulated with the unquestioned and unequivocal preferred image of the popular culture of India (p. 151).

Although respondents at Bangalore Doordarshan were careful to reiterate the objectives of the network to strive for secular and communal harmony, they accepted the high proportion of Hindu-oriented programming as a natural reflection of the majority composition of Hindus in the nation.

Christian and Muslim low and middle income viewers in this study said they did feel excluded from the narratives of Doordarshan, yet did not worry too much about it because they understood their minority position within the nation.

The minority identity articulated by these viewers calls into focus the interpretive frameworks (Morley 1992) from which such articulations arise. India's independence in 1947 coincided with the Indo-Pakistan partition. Chatterji (1991) writes:

> While people were jubilant at the dawn of freedom and the new vistas it seemed to herald, millions wept. Partition resulted in a gigantic two-way migration of Muslims to Pakistan and of Hindu and Sikhs to India and to brutal killings unprecedented in history.... For the millions of Muslims who stayed behind in India, it has remained a problem to be accepted as a distinct group and yet to be integrated into the national life of the country. Despite free India's declared adherence to secularism, Hindu-Muslim riots and fears of discrimination against religious minorities, including Christians and others, have not disappeared (pp. 14-15).

Through the nation's 50 years as an independent state, Hindus have received prominence in various administrative, political, and educational institutions. Special

reservations for the backward Hindu classes (described as "scheduled castes" and "scheduled tribes" in official census reports) ensure that these individuals receive preference over religious minorities. The embeddedness of this postcolonial identity may, from the viewers' comments, indicate that resistance against this hierarchical structure is not possible. However, it is simplistic to think of resistance as solely a political action. The preference for private television programs which focus on diverse groups of people in game shows, sitcoms and drama serials is in itself an act of resistance against the overwhelming Hindu narratives of Doordarshan.

The preference for private regional channels among most of the low income viewers and for private Hindi and English channels among most of the middle and high income viewers, and the further differences in preference based on language, gender, and religion of the respondents points to the emergence of communities defined by religion, class, and most importantly, language. In a nation divided by language, politics and religion, private cable channels may have serious implications for sustained national integration. The concluding chapter provides a summary of this study and a discussion of the impact of competing television networks on national identity.

# CHAPTER IX

## FRAGMENTED COMMUNITIES?

After much debate in Parliament, the Prasar Bharathi Bill came into effect on November 23, 1997. Veteran journalist Nikhil Chakravarty was made chairperson and six part-time members were chosen from such varied fields as journalism, science, and history ("Prasar Bharathi board formed," 1997). Although the implementation of this bill to a large extent, marked the end of a tumultuous year of broadcasting ("Ban on DTH," 1997) it also spelled the beginning of more conflict between media and politics. Government influence on Doordarshan and All India Radio no doubt diminished considerably. However, through a clause in the Prasar Bharathi Act, the government will still able to censor television programs in the interest of moral decency and national security. Bhandare (1997) summarizes that the role of Doordarshan as a public broadcaster may be refined such that:

> This role (is assigned) to just one channel, leaving the others to become commercial and competitive. The other option, already provided for in the Act, is to levy a licence fee on all television and radio sets, as is done in Britain where the money thus collected belongs by law to the BBC. This option is politically less palatable. Doordarshan is currently weighing its revenue-raising options, including the leasing out of its transmitters' unutilised capacity to private players (p. 2)

The autonomy of the broadcast media in India and the renewed focus on commercialization due to the lack of government funding brings us again, to the issue of

the impact of private television channels driven by commercial interests, on national identity in the country.

Using an ethnographic approach, this dissertation has examined the correspondence between production and consumption of television in India. Through participant observation and interviews, it has connected political economy and audience analyses. It shows empirically that there is a resonance in cultural constructions of network and audience identity between the producers and consumers of television.

The location of the study in Bangalore city allowed the analysis of international, national, and local television networks as part of the global processes within the city. These networks, as lucrative links between advertisers and consumers, increased their focus on the urban consumer. Knowledge of the audience community was crucial and the identity of this community was defined as urban and affluent by the private cable channels, and rural and backward, by Doordarshan. As discussed earlier, Doordarshan's definition was revealed as ideological rather than realistic by respondents low in the hierarchy of this institution.

The location of the study also allowed the analysis of urban audiences' responses to the programming on the international, national, and local television networks. Audiences were aware of the global processes within the city as well, and their perceptions of inclusion or exclusion in television narratives were based on whether these narratives echoed the technological and economic progress of the city in which they lived, or whether they constructed a context that was rural and underdeveloped and alien to their urban contexts. These families for the most part, preferred the narratives of

the private cable channels, which implied their viewers to be progressive, urban individuals, over those of Doordarshan, which constructed its viewers to be backward and rural. Through this analysis, this dissertation advances research on globalization and national identity methodologically and theoretically.

## Methodological Issues

Methodologically, this dissertation advances scholarship by linking the processes of production and consumption of television. Fieldwork and interviews at television stations and audience homes allowed me to draw connections between definitions of community expressed at both ends of the television equation. Although this meant intense and strenuous fieldwork, it advanced the analysis from mere speculation about either production or consumption, to actual observations about the two.

The ethnographic method itself revealed several issues of power in the field worthy of note. First, the duration of visits differed among families because, as a researcher, I could enter their lives and contexts only to a degree they were comfortable with. This degree of entry varied with the difference in income level and gender between family members and myself. Thus, I could spend the most time with families of low income groups because they felt, in their own words, that it was a privilege to entertain me in their homes. Although uncomfortable at first with my presence, these families gradually grew less uneasy and asked me several times to continue visiting them. In the middle income families, I was treated as an equal because I was of similar background as my respondents. The lengths of my visits here were shorter because the respondents in these families found it hard to comprehend why several visits were

necessary for me to write a research paper on audiences, rather than a single interview session. In high income homes, my research interests and international experience were accepted with a matter-of-fact attitude. My visits and questions were accommodated as an affirmation of the internationality of these families, and their responses to my questions on their viewing choices validated their perceptions of themselves as citizens of a global community. The power hierarchy of researcher over respondent was subverted in that I became a student with interest in their activities, and with questions they could answer.

The amount of time spent within audience homes also varied based on differences in gender between me and the respondents. For example, Padma and Saraswathi, both dynamic and energetic women, were pleased to have me in their homes. Padma's husband Ganesan came home late in the evening and hence his interactions with me weren't as frequent as were those between Padma, her children, and me. Ganesan's absences provided a good opportunity for me to understand her struggles with charading as a Hindu and with supporting her alcoholic husband. Saraswathi's lack of a steady male partner also allowed me to spend more time in her home, chatting with her about life and television. On the other hand, Kareema's husband, a watchman in her employer's house within whose compound they resided, worked close to his home. His quiet presence inhibited Kareema's comments to me and his interactions with me were conducted through her. He found it awkward to talk to me directly and established his power-position in the household by drawing up a chair to watch television beside me.

During family interviews, both Padma and Kareema's husbands attempted to

take control of the conversation. They answered questions addressed to their wives and children and often supplemented the latters' responses with modifications of their own. In the middle and higher income families as well, Chandrashekharaiah and John respectively, for example, attempted to speak for their families. However, the women and children in these families protested against generalizations and voiced their own opinions.

My struggles with power in the field find resonance in the works of various feminist ethnographers. Najera-Ramirez (1988) discusses how she negotiated the patriarchal power structures during her fieldwork on *la Fiesta de los Tastoanes* of the Jocotenos. As a *mejicana*, she was aware of the distance to be maintained between men and women, and could not get involved in intimate discussions with the male head of the household where she was staying. Although she was married, her independent presence was questioned by males and females in the community and, ultimately, she was regarded as a schoolteacher because her research and academic background could most closely be associated with that of a schoolteacher. Also, in her description of her interactions with the male head of the household, Najera-Ramirez noted, as did Lal (1996) in her study of power structures in garment factories in India, that the males exaggerated domineering behavior to gain control over their status threatened by the presence of the female researcher.

My identity as middle class, female researcher, played as important a role as those of my respondents. I negotiated through expressions of power through repeated visits during different times of the day (to speak to the women and children in the

family, for example), and through repeated and rephrased questioning during family interviews, until my method adequately addressed the research questions of this study.

## Theoretical Issues

Theoretically, this dissertation advances research on national identity and globalization. The analysis of television networks and audiences shows that audiences feel empowered by the availability of a variety of channels on television.

Briefly, the lower income families felt they could identify with the problems of characters in their favorite serials and were not concerned about the scanty representations of religious minorities because they understood that India is a nation of Hindus. Thus, predominant representation of Hindu cultural contexts and characters, they felt, was natural.

In the middle income families, however, response to Hindu, middle class narratives on Doordarshan were met with differing perspectives. The Christian family felt completely excluded from Doordarshan and drew their sense of community from American programming on Star TV. Similarly, the Muslim family sought specific Hindi programming on Zee TV -- programming that depicted wealth and affluence and allowed them vicarious participation in a clean and wealthy world. The Hindu family however, although critical of Doordarshan's over representation of North Indians and of the Hindi language, felt included in the national network's narratives of development, education and Hindu community.

All the high income families preferred either Hindi or English-language programs on Zee TV or Star TV respectively, and felt included in the contexts and issues

represented in such programs as "The Oprah Show," "Charles In Charge," "Chicago Hope," and "Picket Fences." These families said the programs they watched dealt with issues such as parenting and adolescence more interestingly and adequately than those on Doordarshan. The teen-agers in these families said MTV and Channel [V] in particular catered to their tastes and interests in music and fashion.

A clear correspondence emerged between descriptions of network and audience identity expressed by respondents at the television stations, and the audience-families. For example, the social objectives of Doordarshan as expressed by the director and executive producer at the Bangalore Doordarshan were echoed by the middle income Hindu family who specifically discussed that Doordarshan's programming for rural masses needed further development in terms of production quality. All other families in this study also said they knew Doordarshan targeted the rural viewer, and hence its messages were irrelevant to them.

Sales executives at the Star TV, Channel [V], and Zee TV offices all described their primary audience as urban, middle and upper middle class. Other than the middle-class Hindu family, all other middle and high income families in this study said they were indeed the target audience for these channels. Similarly, sales executives at Star TV and Channel [V] discussed their target audience as urban teen-agers. Teen-agers in the middle and higher income homes said they enjoyed the urban, international character of Channel [V] and MTV. They said these channels spoke to their needs and specifically targeted them as their audiences.

Although audience research was not adequately developed in the television

stations as stated by respective network employees themselves, broadcasters and audiences' similarity in perceptions of network and audience identity showed that a correspondence existed between production and consumption of television in India.

Following the analysis of television network and audience identity in urban India, we are led to issues of power and culture in the country. What comment then, does this analysis make on the effect of multiple television channels on a nation-state divided by various languages, religions, classes, and castes? I will focus on issues of power and cultural diversity to connect the analysis of television networks and audience reception in postcolonial India.

## Power, Cultural Diversity, Television, and the Nation State

An important observation of this study is the cultural diversity of the respondents. The multiple television channels offered each family and individual members within each family, a space in which they could connect with specific contexts in time and space. Drawing from the cultural studies and postcolonial approach to the study of audiences, this analysis revealed that the respondents occupied complex and shifting positions based on their gender, class, and religious identities. From these positions also emerged patterns of power.

Reception analyses by scholars using a cultural studies approach (Morley, 1992; Radway, 1994), and by those using a postcolonial approach (Mankekar, 1993; Rajagopal, 1996), show that the researcher and the researched are complex individuals with multi-layered identities. This notion intersects with that of feminist theory where such scholars as Wolf (1996), Zavella (1996), and Lal (1996) write that neither the

researcher nor the researched should be essentialized, but regarded through interdisciplinary perspectives as divided and dynamic beings.

The viewing context therefore was regarded, during observation sessions and family interviews, as a site for the expression of respondents' cultural identities and power positions. Patterns of power based on gender emerged within families in terms of seating arrangements; conversation with each other and with me while watching television; program preferences; time of watching; and style of viewing. These examples of power have been described in Chapter 7, and it is important to note that these expressions of gendered identities shattered myths of patriarchy in certain households. For example, in Padma's home, Padma herself changed channels and adjusted the television controls to obtain better reception and not because Ganesan, her husband directed her to do it. In high income families as well, Sumedha was strong in her opinion of what and when television should be watched, and Ruksana overrode her husband's opinion on the quality of television, the family's viewing patterns, and on just about everything else. Also, men as well as women enjoyed soap operas and fictional serials on television.

Thus it is obvious that television within these households provided a space where power could be expressed by certain members in the family. Some of the women found this space empowering and utilized it to subvert the authority their husbands had over them by taking control of the channels; by bringing their vegetables, utensils, and even stove to occupy the primary space in front of the television; or by overriding their husband's/father's opinions about television programs or television in general.

These observations point to the importance of avoiding gender essentialist analyses. However, as Morley (1992) writes, gender and the assumption of patriarchy is a good point of departure. More importantly, the changes in gendered behavior noted in this study are indicative of a transition in familial interaction and relationships. It is not premature to say that the programs of private television itself (and of some programs on Doordarshan) with their narratives of progress and globalization are reconfiguring family hierarchies to a certain extent.

Another aspect of cultural diversity through which patterns of power emerged among the families, was religion. Embedded in the postcolonial psyche is the superiority of the Hindus and the marginality of Christians and Muslims. Historical texts written by both western and Indian scholars discuss Christians and Muslims as foreigners, either as missionaries or invaders (Prakash, 1990). Religion itself, therefore, offers a site for the articulation of power. Various postcolonial scholars chart the history of how India was constructed as a Hindu nation (Chatterjee, 1993; Chatterji, 1991); how national elites established educational and legal institutions based on Hindu principles (Chatterjee 1993); and how colonial writings constructed women as the root of underdevelopment (Derne, 1995; Chakravarthi 1990; Sangari and Vaid, 1988).

Although these authors also argue that the Hindu constructions of nation, patriarchy and womanhood pervade the psyche of all Indians, this study brings to light subversions of these constructions. Hinduism itself was viewed by Christian, Muslim, and even the low and high income Hindu families in this study, as a traditional and superstitious way of life. For example, Padma said her charade as a Hindu woman was

only to allay the fears of her superstitious Hindu mother-in-law. It was her Catholic faith that rescued her husband from alcoholism. Ganesan said Padma's faith kept him from drink and his children were free to choose whichever religion they wished. For Saraswathi, the diverse religions practiced in her home represented her lack of control over her children. Both Ramesh and Maheshwari said they preferred Christianity over Hinduism because Saraswathi's prayers to various Hindu gods did not seem to help their situation. In the middle income families as well, Azeezunissa and her daughters wondered, laughingly, why Hindus loved to gossip so much, while Shanti and her family said their Christian faith protected them from the corrupt political and capitalistic influences in the country. In the high income families, the dismissal of religion itself was an expression of power. These families found adherence to any one faith restrictive. By subscribing to such universal tenets as peace and love, they could flit among cultures and contexts, partaking in the empowering narratives of technology, secularism, and capitalism of the modern nation state.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, secularism in India has historically been used as a political strategy. Doordarshan, as a voice of the government, promotes secularism through the telecast of religion-specific programming on special holidays such as Christmas, Ramadan, and so on. But apart from these special occasions, programming on Doordarshan carries a Hindu bias. Scholars such as Rajagopal (1996), Mankekar (1993), and Mitra (1993), have discussed extensively, as has this dissertation, the significance of the ideology of secularism in the political processes in the country. Each successive government, be it the Congress Party or the United Front government, has

recognized the importance of projecting an image of Hindu supremacy and religious tolerance to garner votes. Yet, religious diversity is antithetical to the progress of the modern state (Rajagopal, 1996). Discussing the television context in the 1980s, Mitra (1993) writes that the epics, the "Ramayana" and the "Mahabharatha" were aired to draw together a community of viewers in the face of increasing diversity and political tension in the country.

This study brings us to a new era in Indian religious and political history. Although the purpose of the analysis of audience responses in this dissertation is to provide a "thick description" of media usage, it can also be used to speculate on resistances to Hindu constructions of community as propagated by Doordarshan. The audiences' rejection of the national network as backward, rural, and boring, and their corresponding religious sentiments where they claimed their Christian, Muslim or non religious states separated them from the traditions and superstitions of Hinduism, indicate alternate constructions of religious identity. Here, non-Hindu or non-religious positions were considered superior and more "modern" to traditional Hindu ones.

Besides differences in gender and religion among the respondents, differences in language and class also provided avenues for the articulation of power and identity. Audiences in low income families were proud of their knowledge of several languages and discussed it as reflective of their worldliness and sophistication as viewers. Individuals (such as Kareema or Padma) who knew only their native language were labeled as backward or domestic by their partners. Regional language television was an attractive option for unilingual viewers who now were not forced to watch only

Doordarshan, a network they could barely understand. In middle income families, television provided a channel for upward mobility. Members of these families could visit places they could never afford to visit, and could learn to speak Hindi and English better by watching the international channels such as Zee TV and Star TV. In the high income families, knowledge and fluency in English was considered a privilege and sign of power. The children of these families said they didn't know or care to know any other language besides English and Hindi. The private English-language channels allowed them to connect to a privileged global community of English speakers.

This study shows therefore, that audiences' responses to television in urban India defy, to a certain extent, gender and religious hierarchies. Women were, to a large extent, strong voices in the private sphere and the respondents in general, resisted Hindu ideologies of nation, woman, and family. There were similarities in the religious latitude among the low and high income families. The availability of multiple television channels does not create diversity among audiences, but allows a space in which pre-existing structures of cultural diversity may be expressed. By bringing international contexts into the private sphere of these homes, television allowed these viewers to either intensify their positions of power or seek avenues to subvert power hierarchies. It also highlighted the north-south divide and allowed audiences to see clearly, the contrast between the squalor and poverty of their neighborhoods, and the cleanliness and affluence of the industrialized countries. Interestingly, this reinforced ties to local community among low income families, created much disillusionment with the nation-state among the middle income families, and empowered high income families who felt

they were finally seeing more of the world to which they belonged.

Rather than run the risk of reading too much into audiences' disdain for Hinduism and for Doordarshan's programming, it is sufficient to say at this point that respondents in this study recognized they were witnessing an era of unprecedented economic and technological change -- change that provided them alternate programming and alternate channels for news and entertainment. The novelty of recent cable connections in many of the families in this study may explain the overwhelming preference for programming on these channels as opposed to that on Doordarshan. However, this preference indicates that in the long term, the availability of region and language-specific programming could contribute to the construction of decentralized, sub-national communities based on differences in class, religion, and language, contesting the constructions of nation, citizen, and national identity propagated by national elites from the nation's center. The expressions of identity and community by both private television networks and urban audiences underscore the importance of a future analysis of viewing communities and perceptions of national identity in audiences after the novelty of private television channels has worn off, and after Doordarshan comes into its own as an 'autonomous' entity with its own definitions of national identity and audience community.

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Table 1

1991 Income, Population, and Literacy Figures for Bangalore District and Karnataka State

| | Bangalore Urban | Bangalore Rural | Karnataka |
|---|---|---|---|
| Area (00 sq. km) | 22 | 55 | 1918 |
| Per capita income (Rupees) | 11,609 | 7,910 | 7,155 |
| (US $)* | 331.68 | 226 | 204.43 |
| Population (000) | 4,839 | 1,673 | 44,977 |
| Males | 2,543 | 860 | 22,952 |
| Females | 2,296 | 813 | 22,025 |
| Scheduled castes | 712 | 327 | 7369 |
| Scheduled tribes | 54 | 49 | 1916 |
| Growth rate | 38% | 15% | 21% |
| Literacy (%) | 76.27 | 50.17 | 56.05 |
| Males | 82.94 | 61.51 | 67.26 |
| Females | 68.81 | 38.15 | 44.34 |

* At the time of this writing, the exchange rate was approximately at 35 rupees to 1 US dollar.

Sources: Government of Karnataka (1995). District Socio-Economic Indicators: 1996 (DES No. 36/1995). Bangalore: Directorate of Economics and Statistics.
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Table 2

Cable and Satellite Penetration in TV homes

| City | HH (000) | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Bangalore | 350 | 43 |
| Delhi | 581 | 31 |
| Madras | 288 | 27 |
| Bombay | 1349 | 50 |
| Calcutta | 329 | 20 |
| Hyderabad | 173 | 21 |

Total percentage of TV homes in the country: 45%

Total percentage of C&S homes in the country: 1-2%

Source: Doordarshan Audience Research Unit (1996). New Delhi: Nutech Pholithographers.

Table 3

Cable and Satellite Channels in India

| Pas 4 | Express 6 | Rimsat G1 | Rimsat G2 | Shiva 1 | Asiasat 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ESPN<br>MTV<br>Liberty-TCI<br>RPG (3)<br><br>Likely:<br>Disney (2)<br>Sony Columbia<br>Time Warner<br>HBO<br>CNN International<br>BBC<br>Doordarshan (2)<br>HT-Pearson<br>Sri Adhikari<br>DSJ TV | BiTV News<br>BiTV Ent.<br>BiTV Films, Music, and Sports<br>CNBC | Sun TV (Tamil)<br>Raj TV (Tamil)<br>Asianet (Malayalam)<br>Gemini TV (Telugu)<br>Money TV (Hindi & English) | ATN<br>JJTV<br>Eagle TV<br>Udaya TV (Kannada) | ATN Movies<br>ATN Ent.<br>ATN Current Affairs | Star Plus<br>Prime Sports<br>Channel [V]<br>BBC<br>Zee TV<br>ELTV/Movie<br>Zee Regional<br>Zed (Zee Education) |
| Apstar 1<br>CNN Int.<br>TNT & Cartoon Network<br>Time Warner<br>HBO<br>TVBI (Hong Kong)<br>Discovery, Disney, MTV | Insat 1D<br>DD1<br>DD16 | Insat 2A<br>DD13<br>DD14<br>DD15 | Insat 2B<br>DD2 to DD12<br>DDMovie Channel | Insat 2C<br>DOORDARSHAN (digital compression) | |

Source: Agarwal, A. (1995, February). A galaxy of choices. India Today, pp. 164-166.

# Appendix A

## Questions for Library and Archival Research

### Description of Networks

1. When was the station established?
2. Where was it established?
3. What is its organizational structure?
4. What are the responsibilities of each department?
5. What are the names of personnel/managers in each department?
6. What is the reach/average share of programming?
7. How are the stations financed?
8. What is the pattern of production and distribution?

### Legal Context of Networks.

a. What are the Cable and Television ordinances that pertain to television and cable in India?

b. What freedoms/responsibilities/code of ethics are each station expected to follow?

c. How is programming and production of private cable channels (STARTV and regional TV) limited by the government (licence fees, censorship etc)?

# Appendix B

## Questions for Observation and Interviews at the Television Stations/Offices

### Personal Information

1. What is the respondent's position/title?
2. What is the respondent's perspective on the television environment in Bangalore?

### Competition.

1. What does the respondent think of global/national/regional programming?
2. What does the respondent see the network doing to counter global/national/regional competition?
3. Is competition a threat at all to the respective network?

### Programming.

1. How are decisions made about what programs to include every month?
2. How are programming menus drawn up?
3. How are programming locations selected?
4. How are actors/actresses selected?

### Station Identity.

1. How is station identity enforced?
2. What are the goals/motto of the network?
3. Does the respondent think the network is accomplishing this goal?

### Audience Connection.

1. What community of viewers is the network trying to reach? Why?
2. What is the nature of the network's audience research?

# Appendix C

## Questions for Audience Analysis

Participant observation

Arrangement/Configuration.

1. Where is the television set located?

2. Is this place a private or public space in the of home?

3. How is television perceived - a prestige symbol, another piece of furniture?

4. Who watches TV the most?

5. How many members are there in the family? Who are they?

6. What and how do they watch?

7. How do the women of the family watch television?

Family Interviews

Viewing Patterns.

1. What do you watch?

2. What do you think of television and its role in your family?

3. Do you get to watch television any time you want? Why?

4. Do you get to choose any program you want? Why?

5. Whom do you watch TV with? how do you watch TV? Do you like this arrangement?

6. What is important to watch? When is it important to watch? What happens if you don't watch this program?

Perceptions of National/Regional/Global television.

1. What do you think of the programming on regional television? Why?

2. What do you think of the programming on national television? Why?

3. What do you think of the programming on global television? Why?

4. Do you think television has gotten better or worse?

5. Which is your favorite program? Why?

6. Some people say television helps them know more about the world -- do you think this is so?

7. Where else do you learn about national/regional/global affairs?

Identity with Program.

1. What class and religion of people do you think are most represented on television?

2. Can you identify with them? Why or why not?

3. Who do you think is the author of that (insert show cited most popular by family members) show?

4. Who do you think they (the producers of the show) think the viewer of the show is?

Feminist and Postcolonial Angle.

1. Are there any rules for watching television in your home?

2. Have you broken any of these rules? Why?

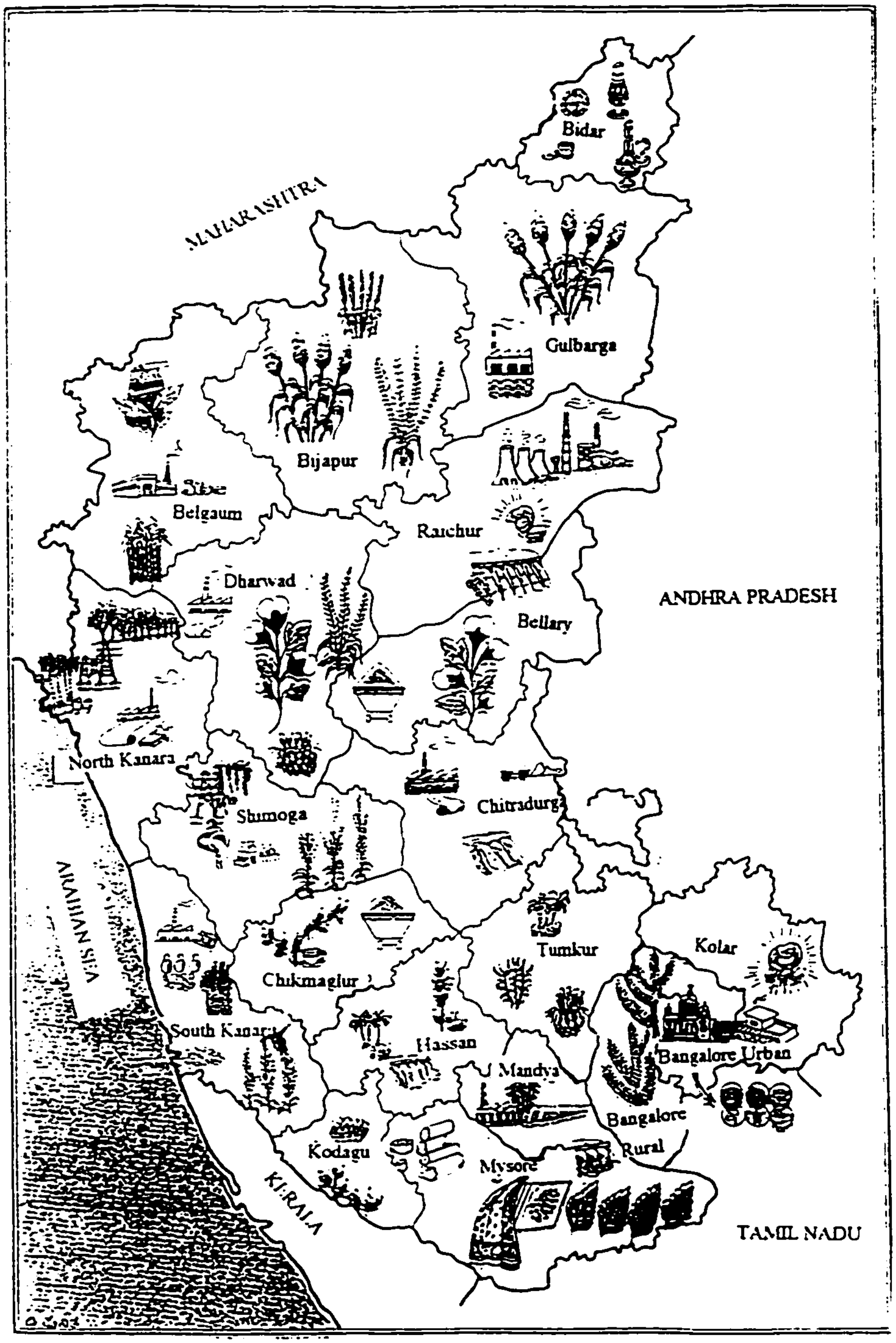
3. Have you had any conflicts about what to watch? How are these resolved?

4. What do think about female characters breaking the norms on television shows?

5. Would you say female actors on television have more freedom than you (or women in your home) do? Why?

Appendix D

Map of Karnataka




Source: Punita, D. (1995). Government of Karnataka: District Socio-Economic Indicators: 1996 (DES No. 36/1995). Bangalore: Directorate of Economics and Statistics.

# Appendix E

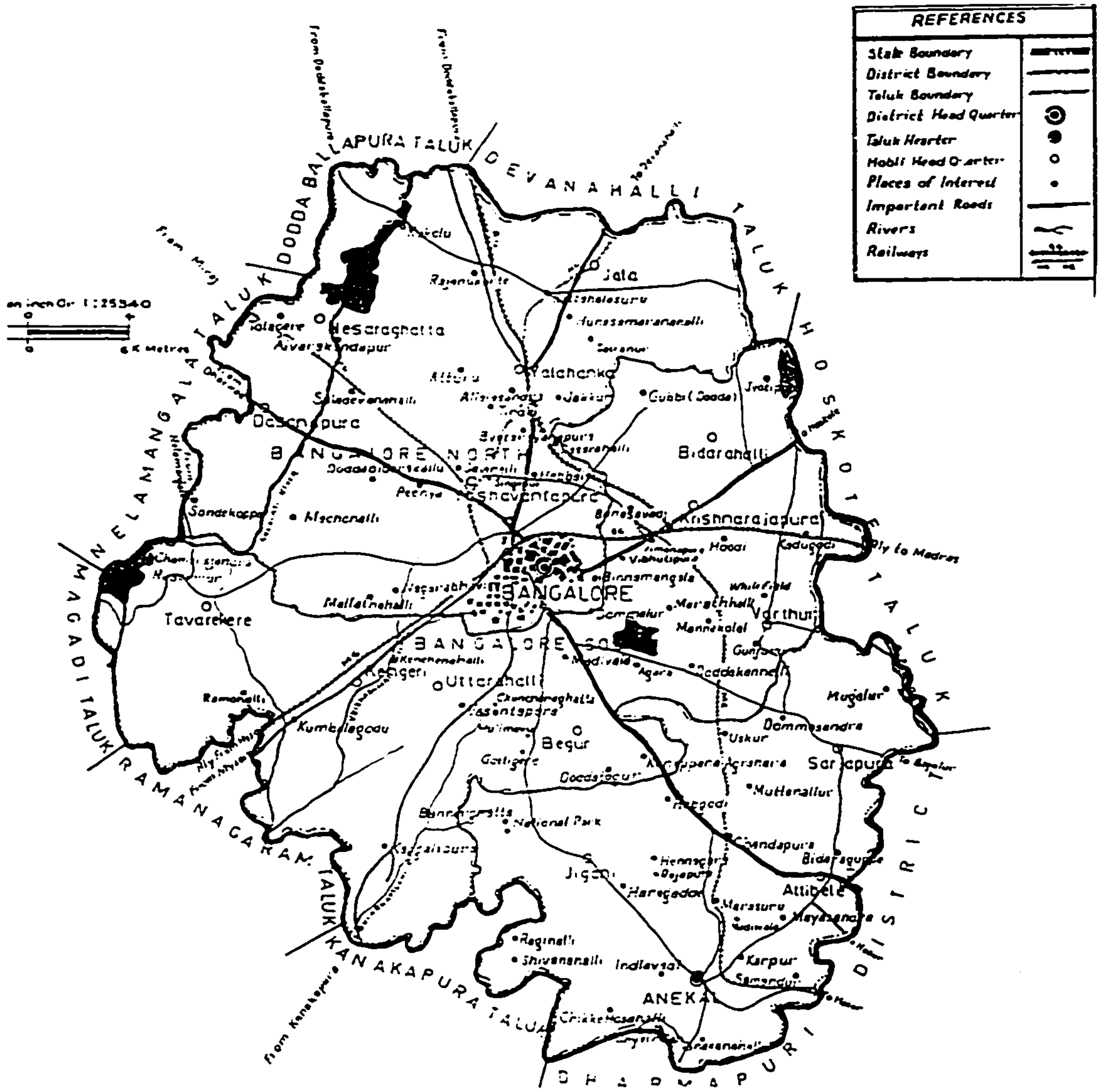
## Map of India




<u>Source:</u> Doordarshan Audience Research Unit (1996). New Delhi: Nutech Pholithographers.

Appendix F

Map of Bangalore




Source: Government of Karnataka. (1990). Gazetteer of India: Karnataka State, Bangalore District. Bangalore: Lotus Printers.

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## EDUCATION

**Ph.D. Mass Communication**, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1998.
Christine Ogan, adviser.

**M.A. Mass Communication**, Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas, 1994.
Thimios Zaharopoulos, adviser.

**B.S. Mass Communication**, 1992, Bangalore University, Bangalore, India.

**B.A. in Journalism, English Literature, and Psychology**, 1991. Mount Carmel College, Bangalore, India.

## SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

Divya C. McMillin and David H. Weaver, "Journalists' Best Work," Chapter 7 in David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, The American Journalist in the 1990s: U.S. News People at the End of an Era (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers, 1996), pp. 217-230.

Thimios Zaharopulos, Carolyn Punitha* et al., International Press Coverage of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, International Communication Bulletin, 30, (1-2), pp. 10-12, 23.

*My name was changed from Carolyn Punitha to Divya C. McMillin after my marriage in November 1995.

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Divya C. McMillin, "Speak Into the Microphone: Female Empowerment on Television in India," Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, Wi, October 1997.

Divya C. McMillin, "Development and Disjuncture on Television in India," International/Intercultural Communication Division of the 1997 Annual Convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Chicago, Il, July 1997.

Divya C. McMillin, "Building Blocs: The Role of the Mass Media in Constructing European Regional Identity," International/Development Communication Division of the Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, Montreal, Canada, May 1997.

Divya C. McMillin, "Pratiloma: The Defiling Marriage of Global and Local on Bangalore's Udaya TV," Duke University Conference on Nationalism and Identity, NC, April 1997.

Divya C. McMillin, "Indian Video Stores: Transnational Connections for the Migrant Indian," Great Lakes American Studies Conference, Indiana University, Bloomington, In, March 1997.

Divya C. McMillin, "Competing Frameworks of Meaning: Global, National and Local Television in India," Crossing the Jordan: Indiana University Cultural Studies' Second Annual Interdisciplinary Conference, Bloomington, In, February 1997.

Divya C. McMillin, "Privatization in Indian Telecommunications: A Pragmatic Solution to Socialist Inertia," International Communication Division of the 1996 Annual Convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Anaheim, California, August 1996.

Divya C. McMillin, "Roles Journalists Play: An Examination of Journalists' Roles as Manifested in Samples of their Best Work," Mass Communication and Society Division of the 1996 Annual Convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Anaheim, California, August 1996.

Thimios Zaharopoulos, Carolyn Punitha et al., "International Press Coverage of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit," International Communication Division of the 1994 Annual Convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Kansas City, Kansas, August, 1994.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Associate Instructor**, Writing for the Mass Media, Spring 1998, Spring 1997, Spring 1996, and Fall 1995, School of Journalism, Indiana University.

**Assistant,** Women, Gender, and Culture, Spring 1998, Department of Women's Studies, Indiana University.

**Associate Instructor**, Mass Media as Social Institutions, Fall 1997, School of Journalism, Indiana University.

**Associate Instructor,** <u>Race, Gender, and the Media</u>, Fall 1996, School of Journalism, Indiana University.

**Associate Instructor**, <u>Introduction to Mass Communication</u>, Fall 1994, Spring 1995, School of Journalism, Indiana University.

**Graduate Assistant**, <u>Speech Communication</u>, Spring 1993 - Spring 1994, Department of Communication, Pittsburg State University.

**Tutor in English**, Writing Center, Fall 1993 - Summer 1994, Department of English, Pittsburg State University.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**Research Assistant**, Summer 1996, Knight Fellows Program, School of Journalism, Indiana University.

**Research Assistant,** Summer 1996, School of Journalism, Indiana University. Collected data for the analysis of interactions of race on prime-time television shows.

**Research Assistant**, Spring 1995, Bureau of Media Research, School of Journalism, Indiana University. Conducted literature searches, data runs, and statistical analyses for faculty members.

**Research Assistant**, Summer 1995, School of Journalism, Indiana University. Assisted Professors David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit in preparation of their manuscript, "The American Journalist in the 1990s," for publication. Duties included conducting statistical analyses through SPSS, coding and analyzing data, and editing chapter drafts.

**Research Assistant**, Spring 1993, Department of Communication, Pittsburg State University. Assisted faculty members with coding and conducting statistical analyses on data.

**Research Assistant**, Essae Chandran Institute, Bangalore, India, 1992. Assisted in preparing teaching materials and course work for classes on basic communication within industrial organizations.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Volunteer operator and announcer**, *KRPS Public Radio Station*, Spring 1993, Pittsburg, Kansas.

**Intern and freelance reporter**, *The Times of India*, 1992, Bangalore, India. Articles, features, and photographs published in the paper.

**Freelance anchorperson,** *All India Radio*, 1992, Bangalore, India. Duties included conducting research, writing scripts, and interviewing people for the Yuvavani (Voice of the Youth) program.

RECENT AWARDS

**Teaching Excellence Recognition Award,** Spring 1997, School of Journalism, Indiana University.

**Outstanding Graduate Student**, 1997 Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges, Research and the University Graduate School, Indiana University.

**Nominee, Commission on Multicultural Understanding (COMU) Award,** Spring 1997, Indiana University.

**Excellence of Research**, May 1994, Office of Graduate Studies and Research and the Graduate Student Association, Pittsburg State University.

**Nathan Carter Wilson Award For Excellence in Communication Activities**, May 1994, Pittsburg State University.

**Graduate Student Research Colloquium, Second Place Award,** April 1994, Pittsburg State University.

**President's Scholarship**, 1993-1994, Pittsburg State University.

GRANTS

**$5,000 Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) Dissertation Award** for non-business Ph.D. students, Spring 1997, School of Business, Indiana University.

**$500 Bureau of Media Research Grant** for doctoral students, School of Journalism, Indiana University.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

**Graduate Student Representative**, Faculty Search Committee, 1996-97, School of Journalism, Indiana University.

**Doctoral Student Representative**, Dean's Advisory Committee, 1995-96, School of Journalism, Indiana University.

**Guest speaker** at Associate Instructor Orientation program, Fall 1995 and Fall 1996, School of Journalism, Indiana University.

**Guest speaker,** Indian Society and Culture, Harmony School Multicultural Awareness Day, Fall 1996, Bloomington, Indiana.

**Guest lecturer**, International News Gathering Systems (senior and graduate elective class), Fall 1997, School of Journalism, Indiana University.

**Guest lecturer**, Globalization of the Media, Spring 1998, Department of Telecommunication, Indiana University.

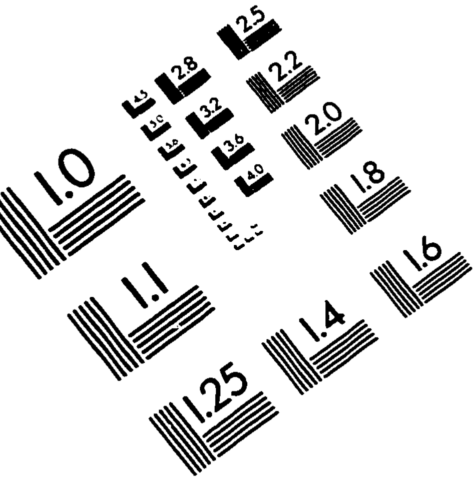
**Guest lecturer**, Introduction to Telecommunications, Spring 1998, Department of Telecommunications, Indiana University.

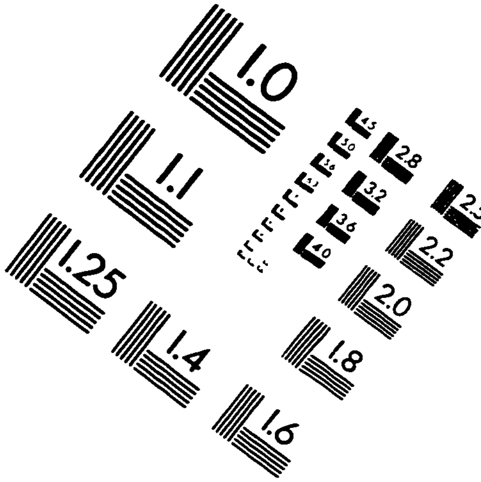
PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

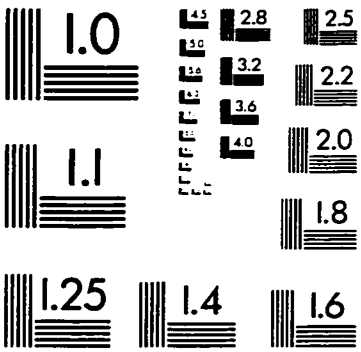
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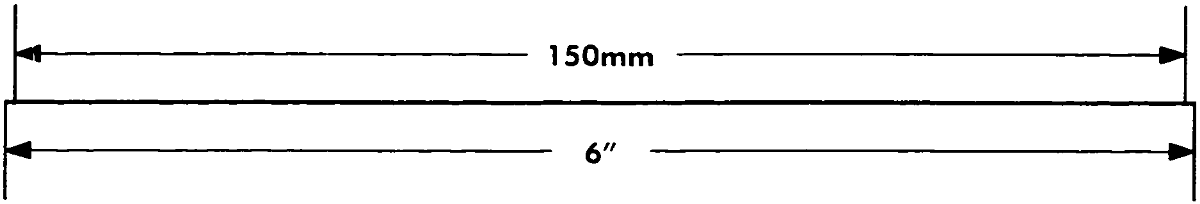
International Communication Association

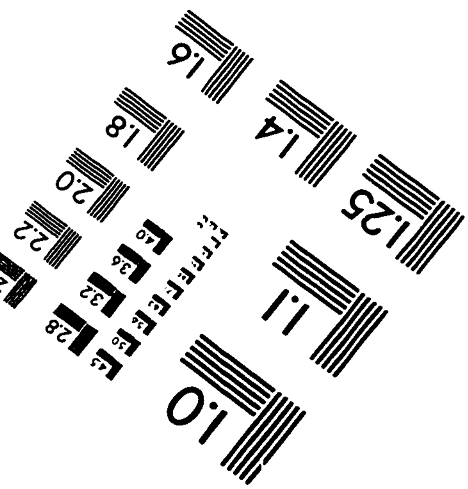
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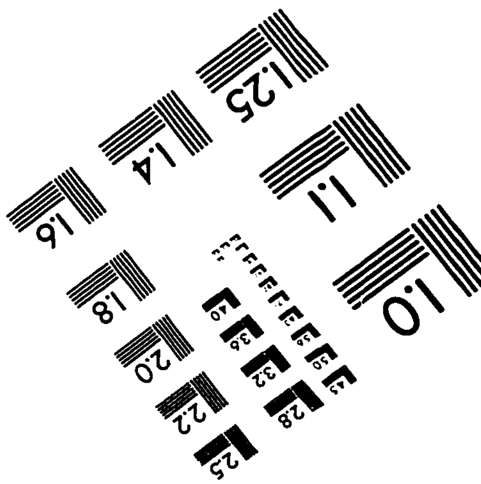








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